

Abstract

CONSTELLATING IDENTITIES AND WORKPLACE GENRES

IN WRITING CENTER DISCOURSE

by

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This study investigates the ways in which blank, written workplace genres mediate relationships and identities in the writing center. Forms developed for scheduling and recordkeeping are part of everyday practices that administrators, tutors, and student writers think little about, and attention should be given to these forms because they are often the first and last points of interaction the writing center has with student writers. Although these documents are typically thought of as outside the session, I situate these forms as literacy objects bound up in a sequence of literacy events that bookend a session in the writing center. Therefore, this project takes up a broader conception of a session that includes the written workplace genres that bring those events into being — the appointment form and client report form — both of which are studied within the context of their intended use, their actual use, and how they have changed over time. The analytical framework designed for this study uses genre theory to account for the ways in which generic forms mediate the writing center workplace and affect the bodies that move through it.



CONSTELLATING IDENTITIES AND WORKPLACE GENRES  
IN WRITING CENTER DISCOURSE

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Brandon Hardy  
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## CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

*I'm approaching 15,000 feet, and clouds slide by like a glacial river. Below, a landscape of moisture, ghostly plains of white ribbons and mountains — the Everest above Everest. I'm in my junior year of my undergraduate degree and on the tail-end of a course my advisor recommended to me called "Introduction to Peer Tutoring in Writing." I co-authored a conference proposal, my first, to the International Writing Centers Association Conference, and it was accepted. Now, I'm en route to sunny San Diego to give my part of the presentation about my experience in the course, learning about this place on campus called a writing center.*

*Still climbing. The horizon arcs, a cumulus ribbon unfurls. Pure azure sky blankets the great dome hugging the Earth. I'm at 36,000 feet now, crossing over the Mississippi River into Arkansas. I'm mesmerized by the patchwork of green and burnt umber; forests and trees are specks in the twist-pile carpet of scarred, rust-colored deltas, canyons, and gorges. My eyes sting from being so close to the sun, but I can't look away from the airbrushed white water rapids of frozen clouds that seem to skate by uninterested by this tin can hurling unnaturally through its domain of powdered mesas.*

*Over the Texas panhandle, coming up on Amarillo, brown squares give way to Martian landscapes — small roads snake and doodle from the crescent through desolate, leathery valleys. A white lake with a hanging mist, our captain tells us, is White Sands National Park, bordered by soot-like stains spilling over the terrain as we cross the Rio Grande Valley. A thin strip of green: farms, roads, and homes pepper the desert and mountains. I see my reflection in the glossy blue paint of a turbine engine and give a little wave, wondering why everyone else aboard has fallen asleep; we're going to California.*

## Introduction

As a young man from rural Tennessee who had not traveled extensively, the 2012 International Writing Centers Association (IWCA) Conference piqued my curiosity before I even touched down. Being able to see the Earth from such a high altitude made me think about perspective and the things we are often unable to see or understand because of our proximity to them. I was excited to learn about writing centers outside the U.S., since the conference was in name “international”<sup>1</sup>, but I was somewhat disappointed to see so few countries represented that year and subsequent years — less than 1% of presenters were from non-U.S. centers (Hardy, 2015, p. 16); this pushed me to learn the nature of writing center work abroad and how the U.S. writing center model is applied to or modified for use in different institutional and cultural contexts. Since then, I have been able to visit some of those centers abroad, as well as work with and learn from their tutors about collaborative writing center research (Dalessandro et al., 2015), an experience that continues to challenge and shape my perspective on writing center work. Although there are many cultural, linguistic, and institutional differences among these centers outside the U.S., I had begun to think more about what is universal across writing center *work* and the ways and means of accomplishing it during day-to-day operations, leading me back to the notion of perspective in the writing center field and how it changes when we oscillate between a broad and granular view of it.

In a research methods course at East Carolina University (ECU), I conducted a small pilot study that analyzed how student writers ask for help when they make an appointment at the writing center, and from that research came a need to linger on what information is collected, how it is used, and if written workplace genres used in the center could be recalibrated to ask

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<sup>1</sup>In 2000, the National Writing Centers Associations (NWCA) changed its name to the International Writing Centers Association (IWCA) to accommodate the increasing number of non-U.S. writing centers.

deeper and more useful questions for tutors to help writers. The appointment form itself appears innocuous and mundane because it is such a common document in the writing center workplace, but I found that particular questions it asked seemed to limit the ways that student writers could respond, and I felt that the interaction between bodies in the center and the written workplace genres used in that space was worth investigating further. Over time, I became more interested in other documentation practices that are so commonplace they often escape the attention of administrators, writing tutors, and student writers. The appointment form is a fairly common instrument across writing centers, and writing tutors will typically complete some form or report following the meeting with a student writer. Although familiar and routine, these documents may be used for different purposes and designed for different audiences, and these rhetorical dimensions might not be clear to individuals who use them. As these interactions with written forms mark the beginning and ending of a meeting between tutor and student writer, I designed this dissertation project to discover and qualify that impact and resonance beyond their role in merely “getting work done.”

### **Problem Statement: Getting Work Done and a Need for Genre Theory**

Grutsch McKinney (2013) opens *Peripheral Visions* by enumerating several tasks that a typical writing center director is expected to perform, from training tutors to maintaining records to meeting with students or faculty (p. 1-2). These kinds of everyday activities are part of the job, but directors may not see that work quite as meaningful if they are thought of as unrelated to tutoring. Writing center directors’ working lives are complex, and the working lives of writing

tutors<sup>2</sup> are, too. Together, these people form important structures that animate writing center work, but this work gets done through creating and interacting with documents and other forms outside the domain of a face-to-face session. As a field, we perhaps spend too much time scrutinizing the particulars of what actually happens in a session and not enough on what encompasses and mediates that interaction. The in-session perspective lends itself well to studying a dialogue between tutor/consultant and student writer, so examining that talk would seem to be where we need to pay closest attention—that is where the real “work” happen, right? Scholars have used various methodologies for studying spoken genres in the writing center, such as discourse analysis of talk-in-interaction for describing tutoring strategies, both verbal and non-verbal (Thompson, 2014; Mackiewicz & Thompson, 2015), but few methodological frameworks have been used to effectively study common written genres found in the center that extend out of the talking. Productive, dialogic interaction between student writer and tutor is of course central to a writing center’s purpose; however, the face-to-face meeting is given shape and co-constituted by written genres like the appointment/intake form, and perhaps even more so for online appointments.

Some written genres, however, have been the subject of study in recent scholarship in the field. For instance, fair attention has been given to the content of tutor reports and session notes. In her analysis of tutor reports, Malenczyk (2016) offers organizational rhetoric as a way of highlighting tension between the function and intended use of these forms and their actual use. These forms “are not just exchanges between the tutor and one or more people but are, rather, part of an institutional network of relationships” (p. 77). She acknowledges the writing center as

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<sup>2</sup> “Tutor” has been the most common term in the scholarship to describe those who provide writing support either as a peer or professional; however, in more recent years, other terms have emerged such as “advisor” or “coach,” yet “consultant” seems to be the most common descriptor across U.S. centers in particular, in my experience.

both a workplace and an organization in which storytelling plays an important role. Stories of what happens in a session are shaped by rhetorical constraints of the tutor report genre — narrative markers indicate how that work gets represented and what ways (p. 88). Malenczyk (2016), as well as Hall (2017), help to make visible the complexities of writing performed as part of our daily practices. I agree with Hall's (2017) assertion that writing center work is made up of a number of everyday documents that "cry out for study" (p. 9). In his book *Around the Texts of Writing Center Work*, he uses a different methodology for each type of generic artifact he examines: a list of best tutoring practices, tutoring transcripts, session notes, a writing center blog, and a tutor education assignment. How he selected these artifacts is not clear, although his inquiry-based approach suggests that he is more interested in highlighting how different theories can be useful for shedding light on mundane objects and their associated activities. Although his analyses are articulate and diverse, his project does not concern the salient, form-specific features of these genres, which I intend to elucidate in this dissertation by building upon Hall's (2017) call for more research on these kinds of texts. More attention should be given to the formative and substantive nature of these and other written genres integral to writing center work because everyday, seemingly mundane artifacts in the writing center function as dynamic rhetorical structures that shape the identities of student writers and tutors through generic forms.

### **Statement of Purpose: Magnifying the Complexities of Writing Center Work**

Writing centers, and to an extent, the larger fields of composition and writing center studies, have struggled for decades to stabilize and legitimize an identity in higher education. After undergoing a radical transformation from a remedial, early 20th century writing laboratory to a more process-driven pedagogical model in the 1970s and 80s (Boquet, 1999), writing centers

have become ubiquitous sites of learning at U.S. institutions and can now be found in various forms outside the U.S. as places where student writers can get one-on-one writing support from a tutor. As this development took shape, and as scholars and researchers in writing center work began to find their footing, so did the formation of what Grutsch McKinney (2013) refers to as the “writing center grand narrative,” the story writing center practitioners (WCPs) tell themselves and others about the work they do. This grand narrative serves as a reductive, ideological mechanism that sediments and reproduces particular notions of what constitutes writing center work. The idea of a writing center as a comfortable place where all students go to get one-on-one tutoring on their writing is a seemingly shared perception among some WCPs, leaving any kind of work that does not neatly conform to the norms in this familiar story to escape our attention. Many activities unrelated to tutoring often go undocumented because of the “perimeters writing center professionals have put on the work of the writing center” (p. 57). Furthermore, these perimeters limit the scope of that work because many WCPs believe that one-to-one tutoring is the one commonality they share (p. 58). If this kind of siloed thinking is allowed to persist, practitioners in the field risk the “collective forgetting of the complexity of writing center work” (p. 80). I am interested in those complexities and what they might tell us about the current nature of our work in terms of literacy practices that take place in writing centers. Specifically, I am interested in the ways that writing center workplace forms — these scarcely studied genres that pivot and reorient individuals as they transition from one activity to the next — are involved in a sequence of discourse/literacy events and how those forms are taken up by writers and tutors in the writing center (Brandt & Clinton, 2002). My goal is to explain writing center discourse through a literacy practice framework, which is essentially how writing is used to create and alter social relationships (Edwards, 2012). The structure that I use to

discuss this sequence is borrowed from medical rhetoric<sup>3</sup>, breaking down each stage of interaction between forms, tutors, and student writers, and what each practice is designed to accomplish, and it is further detailed in Chapter 2.

The session and its encompassing practices and objects comprise “literacy events,” time-bound experiences in which human and non-human actors control the terms of literate activity (Brandt & Clinton, 2002; Heath, 1983). The nature of that event is socially situated and dictated or affected by what happens before — the writer’s input on the intake form to be later interpreted by the tutor. The session, as a literacy event, is further recontextualized after the session by the tutor completing a client report form. These intake and session report forms act as literacy objects that “remain visible and animate outside the literacy event” (Brandt & Clinton, 2002, p. 344), and they are part of a larger sequence of speech events that I argue sediments discourse in writing center practices; they perform through language that potentially distort or recontextualize information in ways that regulate and normativize behaviors, roles, and distributions of power. Factors such as these not only influence how one works with that writer in the future, but also how that writer works with other tutors should they choose to return. Looking at these forms as the opening and closing of a total speech situation provides an opportunity to zoom in on mostly invisible linguistic forces that shape the workplace environment of the writing center. Speech-acts theory has been applied in some degree to writing center scholarship or research, often within the context of the conversation between writer and tutor (Thonus, 2001; Williams, 2005); however, little has been done to look at how the structure of interaction is mediated by the

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<sup>3</sup> I recognized writing centers have a long history of distancing themselves from their clinical roots, their origin in remediating bad writers and fixing “broken” papers. Even so, the process of visiting a writing center is somewhat akin to a visiting medical clinic because of the behaviors, procedures, and documentation practices that mediate that process. Therefore, medical rhetoric, which encapsulates language, signs, and social interaction specific to health and medical situations, informs the design of my analytical lens. I further unpack the conversation surrounding clinical discourse and medical rhetoric in Chapter 2.



workplace forms used before and after the session, and borrowing from genre theory could help account for that gap.

The writing center is a locus for literacy practices including both spoken and written communication mediated by various workplace genres. I am most interested in investigating “blank” forms as genres and their nature as, and vehicles for, utterances that produce a particular response, whether desired or undesired, in the person(s) using them. The client intake form (appointment form) and the post-consultation client report form are part of everyday practices that administrators, tutors, and student writers do not think much about; they have been codified into a literacy event that bookends a writing center session even though they are typically thought of as outside the session. These typically computer-generated forms and their associated documentation practices temporally bracket the session between writer and tutor. Writing center researchers need to pay attention to these forms because they are the first and last points of interaction the writing center has with student writers, and they are woven into a larger experiential frame of which the meeting between student writers and tutors is at the core. Similarly, these forms have also been used to reduce students to numbers, erasing their bodies in assessment practices. As writing centers move toward more socially just initiatives, we should hone in on how these forms affect bodies that move through the center by adopting a humanistic, bodies-conscious approach that privileges the individual student writer.

Using a bodies-conscious approach, I have anchored this research to empathy in information design. My tutoring philosophy, for nearly a decade, has reflected my view of empathy as what I consider to be a writing tutor’s superpower; it will be the lens through which I analyze and interpret my findings later presented in this dissertation, and it will inform my concluding recommendations for developing forms that not only solicit information to *know*

about a student writer's or writing tutor's doubts, goals, concerns, or expectations, but also to *understand* those doubts, goals, concerns, or expectations. A bodies-conscious approach to writing center work accounts for the individuals, the human beings imbedded in that workplace. It also advocates looking at writing as a bodily experience — bodies that write and can be written upon — that could make one vulnerable and reticent to share aspects of their writing process or the texts they have written. This approach might seem a little unusual to some in our field, but I developed it from medial rhetoric and clinical consultation discourse as a way of getting at the intimate, the personal, and the vulnerable aspects of writing as a concept, process, and product to create an ethic of care for writers, one that explicitly demonstrates respect for the student writer's individual process and output while discovering the most effective way of helping them.

As I will show later in this dissertation, the clinical roots of the writing center might be useful, or perhaps even advantageous, to revisit in helping writing center practitioners rethink how we work with student writers and consulting staff through a social justice lens that comes out of education: what can we add or change versus what should we give up to be more accessible, present, and mindful. The first step, I believe, is starting with the *work* itself in a writing center, what is used for that work to get done, and how we can avoid letting those tools we use everyday *act* in potentially insidious ways upon the individuals who use them.

Intake forms and client report forms, both in medical and consultational settings might be considered empathically dissonant genres in that they ask for very personal information and pose as genres designed to help those who use them and, by proxy, a person rendering a consultation service — yet the information these forms collect is primarily used for administrative reporting, to make persuasive arguments for the quantity of sessions and the “types” of writers that move

through the space, primarily to justify its own existence and status in an academic institution. Writing centers are poised, however, to recontextualize these forms as empathically synergistic genres by retooling them at a rhetorical level and recalibrating their primary purpose and audience(s) intrinsically bound up in their design. In other words, making them more purposeful, practical, and transparent for those who use them would make local and distributed writing center work more effective without sacrificing their administrative leverage. Additionally, ensuring that these forms are used to solicit useful information from student writers may potentially better create a climate of trust between them and consulting staff.

### **Questions about Questions: An Overview of the Study**

In this section, I will present the research questions that carried this study, an overview of the methodology used, the rationale for its design, and the significance of the research to the field.

### **Research Questions**

The central research question of this dissertation is: In what ways do blank, written workplace genres (the intake form and client report form) mediate relationships and identities in the writing center? Secondary to this main research question, this dissertation will attempt to answer the following secondary questions:

- What are these genres' *intended* use?
- How are these genres *actually* used?
- What do these genres do on their own, removed from authorship or creator(s)? In other words, what agency do they possess?
- How do these genres change over time in a particular center?
- What new genres are introduced and when, and which ones are abandoned and why?

## Overview of Methodology

Writing center discourse encapsulates much more than a one-on-one tutorial. Therefore, a broader conception of a session that includes the literacy objects that bring that event into being is necessary to understanding how it takes shape. As current writing center scholarship does not provide a robust analytic frame to look at the ways in which a time-bound writing center session mediates the experiences of tutors and student writers, part of my dissertation study includes designing a methodological framework to account for a more complex picture of those experiences. Thus, for the purposes of this dissertation, the unit of my analysis and discussion is the moment a student writer makes an appointment to the moment a tutor completes their session notes. These parameters are bound by written workplace genres, both of which I study within the context of their intended use, their actual use, and how they have changed over time. To inform my methodological framework, I bring together theories of genres, speech-acts/performativity, and literacy to account for the ways in which generic forms mediate the writing center workplace, as well as how that work is accomplished through genres developed for recordkeeping purposes.

I used genre artifact analysis to investigate the intake form and client report form as written workplace genres that writing center staff, student writers, and tutors interact with on a daily basis. To address my central research question — In what ways do these blank, written workplace genres mediate relationships and identities in the writing center? — I conducted my study at two levels: 1. a broad-scale study created in Qualtrics (see Appendix A) in which I collect these generic artifacts and conduct follow-up interviews with participants; and 2.) focused interviews with writing center administrators.

## **A Road Map: What to Expect**

Evident in this chapter are the goals of my dissertation research, which include:

1. accounting for workplace conventions and the written and spoken genres that mediate that work,
2. articulating a new perspective of text assemblages, one that builds on genre ecologies to highlight the mediational aspect of genres rather than how they operate as communication, and
3. discovering what aspects of writing center work can be improved upon by critiquing them through a medical rhetoric lens to promote positive formation of and relationships between tutors' and student writers' identities.

These three objectives help me to further challenge writing center studies to investigate unexplored artifacts that have been insufficiently discussed or not at all. More importantly, from this research I argue for a bodies-conscious approach to writing center work, looking to organizational and medical rhetorics as lenses for rethinking behavior norms, protocols, policies, and procedures. This approach is compatible with a student-centered approach for working with writers, and it makes room for studying and discussing writing centers as a professional context and its discourse.

In the next chapter, I offer a review of literature in the field in order to demonstrate how my framework and its various tenets are configured, first discussing the writing center as a workplace, then looking at the ways that writing center scholars have dabbled in aspects of genre analysis. Following a discussion of that scholarship in Chapter 2, I introduce a third strand involving the impact on bodies in the writing center — this impact will be thoroughly interrogated at granular and holistic levels. Afterwards, I describe the sequence of genre-mediating literacy events that make up the total student writer's experience, a frame that permits a layered approach to this study. Chapter 3 will feature the methods and methodology employed in this dissertation project, including a broad-scale survey study distributed to WCPs, followed by focused interviews with writing center administrators. In Chapter 4, I will discuss the results

and analysis of both studies. Finally, I use the findings to propose suggestions, considerations, and alternatives (about WC forms) in Chapter 5.

As a whole, this dissertation offers WCPs and others involved in writing support an introduction to the minutiae that exists between bodies and workplace documents — their agentive and affective properties — which may potentially reveal disruptions and breakdowns in information design. If writing centers adopt a student-centered or writer-centered approach, then this research can help writing center practitioners to consider the ways in which they ask for information, how it is actually used, and the effect these forms have on student writers and tutors. As these forms are common across writing centers, I believe we would do well to think through information design in macroscopic, mesoscopic, and microscopic terms to gain both breadth and depth of our own workplace practices and the potentially harmful qualities that might escape our attention.

## **CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Introduction**

In Chapter 1, I proposed that workplace genres in the writing center should be more intensely studied in order to learn their impact on the individuals who use them in the space, and how those genres discourse and social interaction. I also presented a brief overview of my dissertation research and the impetus for conducting it at multiple layers of scope for broad and granular views of that impact. In this chapter, I review the literature from writing center studies and genre theory to better contextualize my research design and to develop my methodological approach. Drawing from scholarship and research in Rhetorical Genre Studies (RGS) and organizational/professional communication, I propose a way of thinking about genres as dynamic artifacts that constitute and reproduce ideologies, narratives, and identities in the writing center. Although genres may impact administrators' and student writers' identities, this literature review reflects the professional role of writing tutors and how that identity built through their interaction with written workplace genres. If a tutor reviews an intake form prior to a meeting with a student writer, they may construct a preconceived idea of the writer based on their training and professional development before the two individuals meet. Following the session, if a tutor uses a client report form to document and reflect upon the meeting, then their input is filtered through that lens as well. Reaction to student writers' input and writing of their own input are two actions made as employees in the writing center, and the salient features of the forms guide and reinforce those actions; this is the linkage between identity and documentation I will explore in this research. To conclude this chapter, I explain the conceptual framework developed for this dissertation, its roots in medical rhetoric and consultation discourse, and how it supports a body-conscious approach as an ethic of care for writing center practitioners (WCPs).

## **Review of the Literature**

Throughout writing center scholarship, the idea of the writing center as a workplace has not been sufficiently developed. Rather, scholars and researchers tend to gravitate toward a conceptualization of writing centers as being a sort of counter-cultural entity set apart in some ways from its parent institution, as well as a site occupied and operated by peers or non-professionals — the anti-institution or anti-classroom staffed with students, not teachers, and designed to be an active, not passive, learning space (Grutsch McKinney, 2013; Grimm, 1999). While peer tutoring evolved out of a need to level the playing field and equalize distributions of power, writing centers have had, over the years, an unusual relationship with the institutions that supports them, largely because centers and WCPs themselves have grappled with being marginalized in various ways. “Marginal,” as Grutsch McKinney (2013) puts it, is a loaded word that WCPs use — and have used — to evoke a sense of invisibility, expendability, and powerlessness. Writing labs and literacy centers, according to Britt (2006), should be defined as institutions in their own right, micro-institutions that fall between local (classrooms) and global, macro-institutions like a university. These sites of learning use rhetoric to justify and objectify their existence and have had to do so in order to firmly establish their credibility and the work they do in academia. The cozy, comfortable place to get one-on-one tutoring that Grutsch McKinney (2013) critiques has shifted away from its “marginalized” label, giving way to new practices, language, and behaviors that has shaped it into a workplace.

The appointment form positions that writer to take on a particular role before setting foot in the space; they are transformed into a “case” to be treated, an ailed writer that tutors unconsciously taxonomize due to their training. The tutor then assumes a role in relation to that writer based on expectations developed in response to information provided on the form. The



genre of the appointment form in writing center work participates in the co-construction of that work.

In any workplace, writing is instrumental in communicating and carrying out that work, and writing centers have their own genres that help them in managing and assessing the work that goes on in that space. Because little attention has been given to these genres outside of tutoring practices, the development of an analytical frame using genre theory within the field of writing center studies is necessary for better examining the work carried out in that space. Embedded within genres are a sequence of utterances that have varying degrees of force; they “act” upon the hearer and may be misinterpreted, causing an undesirable response in the turn-taking process. The ways in which this phenomenon occurs in various workplace settings indicate how unconsciously and virtually invisibly they act through and upon users via the genres valued by multiple stakeholders in that workplace. I explain how this notion integrates into the concept of a body conscious approach before introducing the conceptual framework that informed the methods used in the study in Chapter 3.

### **Writing Centers as a “Different” Kind of Workplace**

To more effectively reach students in the Open-Admissions era, many universities turned to peer tutoring as its preferred method by “organizing [students] to teach each other” (Bruffee, 1999, p. 637). Non-directive methods of working with writers were privileged in tutor training to ensure that writers remained in control of their writing, an ongoing negotiation of power (Mackiewicz and Thompson, 2005, p. 29). This kind of indirect teaching left some scholars to wonder about the tutor being a peer, since the goal of peer tutoring was to differentiate those who worked with writers from teachers. Peer status, in Trimbur’s (1987) view, is taken away from

tutors when they are trained in academic discourse, essentially rendering them “apprentice” teachers (p. 26). Grutsch McKinney (2013) offers that WCPs restory “marginal” by casting the label aside (we are not victims), admitting where they’ve been but moving on (we used to be marginal), or embracing it as a benefit (we can use marginal) (p. 45). Yet, this aspect of the grand narrative persists; WCPs still see writing centers as “outside the institutional mainstream,” while also belonging to it (p. 45). Whether “marginal” or other particular descriptors of centers, scholarship, and WCPs are used—like “non-traditional” or “rebellious”—there remains a sense of difference in the familiar story perpetuated by the grand narrative.

This iconoclastic identity is further complicated by the writing center as a place of employment, just like its parent institution. A writing center’s staff does its work within the trappings of a job, such as codes of conduct, policies, timesheets, professional development, meetings, trainings, reporting, and so on. A paid tutor is also a peer, but their “peer-ness” is minimized because they are in the employ of an institution, which may affect their perception of student writers as “other” and vice versa. How does this employee status factor into perception as part of a tutor’s professional role and identity? Grutsch McKinney (2013) states that “[t]hroughout writing center work is an ongoing notion that writing center work is different, non-traditional — iconoclastic — and thus those that work there are, too” (p. 35). If writing centers, as iconoclastic entities, resist the institutionality of the university system (p. 36), what kinds of people populate the center and are considered a “good fit” for working there? Tutors exist in a strange, liminal space as both peers *and* tutors, and perhaps the formation of a professional identity is worth examining more closely while taking into account how written workplace genres and language help construct that identity or prevent the iconoclastic identities from actually emerging.

Does a professionalized peer tutor lose their “tutor-ness” and become something else that labels like consultant, coach, and assistant do not capture? Bright (2013) believes that the development of a tutor identity is crucial for an individual working in writing center to be successful in working with student writers. A tutor identity, she argues, is kindred to a teacher identity, one that demonstrates four behavioral characteristics: flexibility, community membership, content and pedagogical knowledge of a discipline, and regular reflective practices (p. 23). Bright (2013) uses identity rather than role here because “playing the role of tutor” is consciously constructed and used temporarily (p. 22). Habits of mind developed during tutor training help to engender a sense of “being a tutor” rather than playing one. Thinking of a tutor in these terms, drawing from teacher training, has its value in instruction, an approach that a particular session might call for, but tutors with teacher hats are perhaps not what we need or what we should strive for. As writing tutors are expected to perform in other professional contexts peripheral to the writing center like class visits, workshops, and other outreach events, seeing them as embedded in a service-oriented workplace might help us to better understand the formation of a professional identity, one that gives rise to leadership opportunities and the development of strong, interpersonal communication skills. Looking at the work tutors do, not only as tutors but as researchers and practitioners in the field, is a necessary shift in perspective that makes what happens outside of tutoring matter, and genre theory is one way to help make the complexities of that work visible, as their interaction with genres like the client intake form and client report form are complicit in shaping the ways in which they perform their professional identities for student writers, faculty, and supervisors.

## **Workplace Genres in Use**

Many English studies and writing center theory scholars have grappled with agreeing on a clear definition of “genre.” Berkenkotter & Huckin (1993) describe genres as “dynamic rhetorical structures that are manipulated according to conditions in use” (p. 285), forms that are not static and give coherence and stability to experience; they are embedded in everyday communicative practices and have more importance in the workplace. Expanding on the social aspect of genres, Carolyn Miller (1984) also posits that genres are dynamic, but also “typified rhetorical actions based in recurrent situations” (p. 159). How individuals construe a type, in Miller’s (1985) view, is what is actually recurring, and not a material situation (p. 157). In other words, the agreed upon conventions of a genre, both its form (its salient, formal features) and its substance (its social motivations), define it in a particular instance of use. For example, a client intake form in the writing center derives its name from the action it performs; it is called such because it marks the initiation of an intake process with a new client-writer, and the genre itself is implicated in the interaction. A contemporary writing center that uses this intake form has perhaps unknowingly carried this genre over from prior iterations of the writing center as a clinical, remedial space under the assumption that forms are transparent, non-ideological, and apolitical communication media; in part, the study developed for this dissertation was designed to determine where this form and others originate. The form as an assessment and self-diagnostic tool—its ancestor or antecedent genre—remains embedded in the electronic form writers may fill out on a web-based appointment tracker like WOnline developed exclusively for use in writing centers. On a more microcosmic level, if we are to take the utterance as a singular unit of meaning that is part of a discursive sequence (Bakhtin, 1987), the form invites a response from the client-writer, acting as an utterance or string of utterances to create discourse.

This interaction can also be examined on a macrocosmic level. Genres used as part of a larger, more developed and fully-articulated system, like an application process for a patent, form “important levers” that are necessary for that system to function (Bazerman, 1994, p. 79). The genres do not support the system, rather they comprise the system. In the writing center for instance, the process of scheduling an appointment, having a session, and leaving with feedback is just one of many activities that make up the mechanistic framework in which it is embedded, and genres are integral to making that process happen with consistent results. These varying definitions of genre apply to workplace documents and forms used in the writing center because they, as rhetorical objects, create and alter reality for the people who use them.

What makes a genre theory approach especially useful for writing center work is that, for the most part, it has been used to study more procedurally-driven professional environments such as insurance companies, patent offices, and traffic control centers, just to name a few. The “work” of writing centers is not governed by procedure as much as it is by operation. Generic objects are operationalized by users—in this case, tutors and student writers—in ways that give coherence and meaning to the work itself. Writing centers are a unique kind of workplace with its own affordances and limitations, but genre theory makes possible the perception of writing center “work” not only as labor but also as the processes and objects within, and product of, a professional context that wrestles with its “difference” and the bodies that comprise it on a daily basis.

### **Intake Forms and Client Report Forms as Mediating Workplace Genres**

In writing center studies, the intake form has not been sufficiently analyzed, but the client report form has been a topic of discussion since the 1990s (Weaver, 2001, p. 35). The primary

concern about client report forms is how they are used and by whom — administrators, tutors, student writers, and instructors. Ethical concerns about whether instructors should have access to these reports have been noted in the scholarship by Weaver (2001), as well the emergence of two camps that debate whether writing centers are an extension of or alternative to the classroom. Weaver (2001) argues that conference summaries should be avoided because they sediment and reinforce a hierarchy between student and instructor, and that tutors' choice of narrative is influenced by their "relationship to student culture" (p. 36). If the center is staffed with peer tutors instead of professional tutors (non-students), the "narrative conventions" used in writing summaries evolve from tutors as students, playing liaison between the classroom and writing center. Because of this hierarchy, Carino, Floyd & Lightle (1991) observed that instructor's involvement as an audience of the report caused tutors to feel like they have no authority in their role. In their study, a brief summary was submitted to faculty with a brief request for response, and fewer less than 15% responded. This indicated to the researchers that tutors' claim for authority depended on faculty giving it to them, which did not engender a sense of professionalism for tutors (Weaver, 2001, p. 40). These observations and conclusions suggest that the form invites particular ways of responding that directly affects the formation of tutor identity and its oscillation between student and professional, and the audiences bound up in the form seem to agitate that construction.

Cogie (1998) calls summary reports "a messy form of communication" that can be made more meaningful by extending the basic beat by beat actions of a session to include purposeful direction for the student writer, addressing *how* the session happened rather than just *what* happened; this gives student writers "useful perspective" into their own writing process and give instructors, should they be given permission to see the report, insight into their students writing

and learning they do not have in the classroom (p. 48–49). On the instructor’s side, they may be able to use this information to inform their teaching strategies and correct approaches that may not be effective. Because of the multiplicity of audiences these reports could have, Cogie (1998) argues that the writing center director should be committed to ensuring these reports are written “with care, given the potential of harm to the student [writer] and disagreement with the teacher and the potential for benefits to all three sides of the tutoring triangle” (p. 51). This ethic of care provides a “productive focus” that extends beyond the record-keeping function of the report form. The messiness that Cogie (1998) discusses is brought about by the cluster of audiences and purposes that increases the variability of responses tutors can make. Although written input on workplace genres has been researched by others in writing center scholarship (Pemberton, 1995; Malenczyk, 2016; Hall, 2017), the ways in which they are collectively implicated in executing the day to day activities in a center begs for additional and more complex analysis. Looking closely at the nature of the blank forms themselves, rather than how users respond to them, is a necessary first step for understanding how their generic language constructs what gets written on the forms.

Rhetorical Genre Studies (RGS) embodies a number of working definitions of genre, including genre as “typified rhetorical actions based in recurrent situations” (Miller, 1984, p. 159), as “a class of communicative events” (Swales, 1990, p. 58), and as “stabilized-for-now or stabilized enough sites of social and ideological action” (Schryer, 1993, p. 200). Genres themselves are performative, as observed by Charles Bazerman (1994), and operate as “important levers” to create consequential social action in his study of patent applications and grants, which he also argues function as speech acts (p. 79). These documents, and their success as utterances, depend on a set of conditions that must be met, à la Austin (1962), including

timing, authority of the utterer, the relationship between utterer and recipient, and the linguistic features of the communicative medium (p. 85). As the intake form and client report form are both genres reproduce a recurrent situation in the writing center — in this case, one akin to a clinical experience — examining them within the context of a total speech situation (including these forms in use, their participants, and the activities they govern) provides writing center researchers with valuable insights as to how they perform, or act, in the minutiae of writing center discourse as organizational communication. Yates & Orlikowski (1992) propose a way of understanding genres as part of organizational communication as structuration, or “the production, reproduction, and transformations of social institutions, which are enacted through individuals’ use of social rules” (p. 299), a notion also taken up by Berkenkotter & Huckin (1993) who describe genres as “dynamic rhetorical forms that develop from responses to recurrent situations and serve to stabilize experience and give it coherence and meaning” (p. 479). For the purposes of this study, I focus on the kinds of responses the blank forms invite and how they orient the student writer and tutor to a particular kind of structure dictated by what is uttered by/through forms.

Blank forms invites response and are designed to elicit a desired response, or as Bakhtin (1987) describes it: “the speaker talks with an expectation of a response, agreement, sympathy, objection, execution, and so forth (with various speech genres presupposing various integral orientations and speech plans on the part of speakers or writers)” (p. 69). The roles and expectations of both student writer and tutor in a writing center setting, however, are subjected to a third participant, the writing center itself as an institutional entity that utters through the forms, forming a triangular relationship that not only co-constructs the actions of student writer and tutor, but also how the information is used and archived.



The language used in the prompts on these forms are integral to understanding how they act at multiple stages of activity. Regardless of who wrote the form or when its creation took place, the utterances themselves function as agents that limit or constrain the writer's input, how it is interpreted, and how that information and the narrative of the session are framed and documented. The forms may have some degree of agency, some affective dimension that is not so immediately apparent, and this is why I am interested in their impact on the bodies that interact with these forms. Even though traditional notions of rhetoric are predicated on the existence of a person speaking or doing things with words, I suggest that the speaker/writer/creator of these forms is less important than the creation. I realize this may challenge the core values of writing studies and in writing centers, but even though these forms are somewhat "dehumanized," they do play a role in constructing the identities of those users who interact with them, and often this occurs through the kinds of responses they invite.

### **Working Bodies in the Center**

A student-centered approach is often the one tutors are encouraged to use when working with writers in the writing center. Writing center administrators, however, risk losing sight of writers as people—writers become objects or numbers that are reported to a higher power. Johnson et al. (2015) state that to "think about rhetoric, we must think about bodies," especially when considering our own bodies and those we write about (p. 39). I advocate for a more body-conscious approach to writing center research that helps to make those bodies more visible and not simply a cog in programmatic assessment. Bodies are easily neglected, ignored, or abused because they have been reduced to a number or a particular "type" of writer, which can be found in nearly every tutor training handbook in print, such as the "reluctant writer" (Harris, 2000),

“the writer with writing anxiety,” “the writer with basic writing skills,” “the writer with a learning disability,” and “the second language writer” (Ryan & Zimmerelli, 2010). Typifying writers may help tutors in deciding the approach most suitable for a session, but this is also a form of reduction or erasure of a student writer’s identity or even their abilities because they are seen as only this one thing. Pistone (2010) argues that a caring tutoring approach “results in a strengthened inter-personal relationship that is more effective at addressing a [student writer’s] heartfelt needs in addition to insecurities about writing” (p. 10), one that raises self-esteem and does not ignore the individual’s need for compassion. At the heart of this caring tutoring approach is the ability to acknowledge and appreciate a student writer’s struggles as writer within academic and institutional constraints, but this approach addresses only the psychological capacity for care, not the physiological dimensions like a bodies-conscious approach.

Adopting a bodies-conscious approach to writing center work is more important now than ever because focusing only on reporting frequency of visits, writers’ satisfaction, and so on is incompatible a student-centered approach as well, even at the administrative level; the ethic of care a bodies-conscious approach facilitates helps practitioners to be mindful of the individual student writer’s unique needs and lived experiences, not those of an artificially and arbitrarily defined group.

The bodies-conscious approach I described in Chapter 1 does another important thing: it acknowledges that the writing center space constructs a reality for everyone within that space, and it might not be a shared reality. This notion is crucial for understanding the reality for student writers and tutors in the writing center space because we cannot presume that the writing center experience is neutral and is responded to a-rhetorically; it emphasizes that rhetoric is agentive, creating and altering reality for the people experiencing it. To reconcile my argument

that forms are rhetorical *and* divorced from bodies by their generic function and nature, I suggest that these forms can act or perform long after their initial creation. This often occurs under the radar of writing center administrators and tutors, which is why it is important to scrutinize their practices, behaviors, and protocols, and to interrogate their ideological motives because they might be doing bodily harm without their knowledge. The ways that bodies are affected and shaped through structured interaction with forms may help writing center staff to develop more effective tools for soliciting information from writers. Analysis of written workplace genres in the writing center and the utterances embedded within them can highlight these affective/phenomenological properties. To examine how these artifacts are operationalized, I have developed a structural framework to help make sense of how the relationship between form, tutor, and student writer described above develops across a sequence of activities that precedes, includes, and follows the actual meeting between student writer and tutor. I will now introduce the conceptual framework I designed for my study to tease out the complexities between forms and bodies in the writing center.

### **Conceptual Framework: Theorizing Clinical Orientations in Writing Center Discourse**

Resistance from faculty, the institution, and the greater academic community has been an issue with which writing center personnel continue to grapple (Gillespie & Lerner, 2004). Battling against a reputation as a remediation center or clinic (Carino, 1992; Boquet, 1999; Grutsch McKinney, 2013), writing centers have established their positions on college campuses, but the cultures and individualized personalities of those centers are in an evolving state, often grappling with faculty who refer student writers to the writing center to “fix” their writing (North, 1984, p. 435). In many ways, a consultation is almost entirely product oriented: student

writers bring written products in various stages of development. In this case, the textual object is given precedence over the student's "writing body." The student writer, in other words, becomes peripheral to the text in question, rather than the other way around. Thus, writing consultations typically operate with a mutual focus on what the writing body produces (i.e. the textual product) rather than how the writing body produces a text (i.e. process). This focus is problematic not only because it fails to adhere to common writing center pedagogy, but also because it encourages tutors to offer more prescriptive advice or strategies designed to eradicate a symptom. To put it another way, concerns about grammar and organization, for example, are more likely to be seen as symptoms to be treated instead of skills that can be improved. Training handbooks like *The Bedford Guide for Writing Tutors* (2015) and *A Tutor's Guide* (2007) privilege process and engaging writers, but in nearly seven years of working in various writing centers and observing tutoring in other centers, I have found this to look very differently in practice. Invariably, each semester I would overhear a new tutor ask (or it would come up in a staff meeting) what to do if a student writer does not bring a text to the session, or worse, does not bring an assignment sheet. I had also observed tutors who had been working for a few months or longer would shut down if a student writer had no draft in the meeting. Perhaps this develops from anxiety from or an aversion to social interaction — working with an inanimate text may be viewed as an easier task than coaching a person on brainstorming strategies, for example — or perhaps the reason is something else entirely, like a tutor's personal approach is that of an editor. Regardless, these behaviors can and do appear among tutoring staff, and a body-conscious approach as an ethic of care for writing centers may help by highlighting the social, humanist nature of tutoring and writing as a process, and hopefully minimizing editorial impulses tutors may have.

Thinking of writing in terms of binaries (process/product) creates a very limited view of what writing is and can be for students writing in a higher education setting. Taking a social approach to academic writing, Ivanič (1997) observes a lack of research on student writer identity, which she attributes to a dominant interest in studying writing as a process, rather than taking a social view of it. Focusing on the process, in Ivanič's (1997) opinion, is too narrow in that it places an emphasis on what the writer is doing rather than what the writer is being (p. 94–98). Writing is an act embedded in a social context, and the writer is a part of that context. Within the writing center experience, more attention should be given to the writer as a person, or rather, as a writing body. Certainly, process is, or should be, valued more than textual production, but WCPs would do well to re-evaluate how they account for writing bodies and identities of student writers and tutors. These ideological frameworks, along with evolving conversations in writing center theory and practice, both in scholarship and in informal settings, play a significant role in developing the modern discourse of writing centers.

The historical development of writing centers has had a significant impact on the construction of a generic writing center identity, one shaped by its student population and governed by invisible institutional power structures, and practitioners cannot continue to avoid the fact that writing center work can be interpreted as a clinical practice; acknowledging this reality is the first step to embracing it. I argue that we can look toward consultation discourse in other contexts to better understand the implications for writing center work and redefine the nature of it in more explicit terms, and in Chapter 5 I use consultation discourse and medical rhetoric as a lens through which to view the structure of interaction and sequence of literacy events in this research.

The dynamics of and interplay between interactional and institutional orders give way to professional, clinical discourse in the writing center. Drawing from interactional sociolinguistics in medical workplace studies, I approach a writing consultation in this study as though it were similar to a medical consultation, also known as a medical encounter. Sarangi & Roberts (1999) identify a sequence of events that take place during that visit, much in the way most writing center training handbooks describe the various stages of a consultation. A visit to the writing center itself cannot be looked at in isolation — the spoken exchange between writer and tutor should be thought of as part of a larger sequence of events bracketed by written communication, and that is where the forms come in. The intake form starts the interaction, and the client report form concludes it.

When scheduling an appointment, student writers will typically complete an intake form (also called an appointment form) either electronically or on paper. The intake form, in my view, is not only an artifact carried over from the clinical model of the writing center that has been shamefully swept under the metaphorical rug, but a document with questions that potentially encourage a “clinical gaze.” Michel Foucault (1963) explains how asking patients questions in a clinical environment communicates a distinctly clinical gaze — it allows clinicians to penetrate the body and gain access to a hidden truth about the patient’s illness (p. 54–55). Through this gaze, clinicians could examine, diagnose, and remedy an ailment. Asking, “What is the matter with you?” evolved into “Where does it hurt?” Thus, the focus of an examination became less about the patient’s own knowledge of his/her body and more about the isolation of a problem for the clinician to address, compromising the patient’s agency. Furthermore, this gaze enables clinician to penetrate and demystify the body with no invasive apparatus; simply looking upon the patient and asking questions was once enough inquiry for clinicians to exercise their

judgment, which, over time, devalued patients' own experiential narratives of their bodies. For writing consultations, however, an intake form is constructed to be used in similar ways; it becomes an instrument of solicitation, of gaining access or insight into something that must be broken, which is why I believe an intervention is necessary. Instead of the consultation focusing on the student writer and the help they want, their text often unfortunately controls the conversation and becomes the thing they, with the instruction and assessment of the tutor, decide needs the most attention.

To reorient the focus to the student writer as an individual, I draw from doctor-patient communication studies, a field in which a wealth of research exists on how physicians ask patients for the kind of help they need or the reason for their visit (Sarangi & Roberts, 1999), as well as how documentation practices, form-filling in particular, affect users (Mallinson, 2002; van Oort, Schröder, & French, 2011; Graeber, 2012; Sharon et al., 2016; Douglas & Mills, 2018). These questions asked by clinicians in a medical interview are context-shaping, or context-renewal utterances: they set the parameters for response. I am interested in how student writers are asked for the help they want, how that information is used by tutors, and what happens to it. Session notes may accumulate in WOnline or some other database, for example, but are they useful in future sessions? A writer's history, at least their reasons for coming to the writing center, should begin to develop over time into something that tutors and the center itself can learn from and be made useful. If the intake form and report form are redesigned using a medical discourse lens so that they have cumulative value and not just serve as a means for tracking appointment data, questions can be recalibrated with the individual in mind, and it becomes easier to justify their purpose in targeting specific needs. My research pulls back the curtain on what these workplace genres *do* to impact the actual session and future sessions, as

well as the day-to-day practices of the writing center not only to make that reorientation possible, but to make it a priority.

### **Conclusion**

Evident in the literature presented in this chapter is the shift toward making writing centers a more professional space, the ways in which genres are involved in performing or acting upon users, and how a body-conscious approach can be used to see workplace genres' effects in a new way to better understand a student writer's goals or needs. At the heart of this research is the forms, their nature, their impact, and how they fit into a larger framework of social interaction that develops across a sequence of activities that precedes, includes, and follows the actual meeting between student writer and tutor. In the next chapter, I describe the methods carried out in this study to collect generic artifacts and responses from writing center administrators.



## **CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY**

### **Introduction**

Literature on written genres and documentation practices in the writing center, as evidenced in Chapter 2, is limited in scope and has not considered how the intake form and client report form are both tangled with the bodies that create, maintain, and interact with them. To best capture that interaction and impact, I developed a broad-scale survey and conducted interviews with writing center administrators. The broad-scale survey was created and then distributed by email; participants had a three-week window to complete it. Interviews were conducted via phone, which were later transcribed for coding and analysis. Both of these methods have been used to study workplace practices in writing center scholarship (Driscoll & Perdue, 2014; Grutsch McKinney, 2013; Hall, 2017). As previewed in Chapter 1, this study focuses on how documentation practices develop, shift, and respond in terms of use and action, as well as how bodies adapt and respond to those practices. This study employs both survey and interview methods to best render a broad snapshot and in-depth analysis of documentation in different writing center contexts across the globe, focusing on the intake form and client report forms as genres instrumental for executing writing center work across and within institutional boundaries. The methodology developed for this study integrates forms and their use within a time-bound framework that demonstrates who interacts with them and when, which is later discussed in Chapter 4.

In this chapter, I describe the methods used to address the following research questions:

1. In what ways do these blank, written workplace genres mediate relationships and identities in the writing center?
2. What are these genres' intended use?
3. How are these genres actually used?
4. What do these genres do on their own, removed from authorship or creator(s)? In other words, what agency do they possess?

5. How do these genres change over time in a particular center?
6. What new genres are introduced and when, and which ones are abandoned and why?

Answering these questions can help writing center administrators reconsider their orientation to student writers, how their perspective of those writers is filtered through information design and acquisition, and, perhaps more importantly, how that information is disseminated across multiple audiences in reporting and assessment. Within the scope of interaction with appointment forms and client report forms are bodies that have to negotiate and adapt to them in ways that are often represented in a fragmented and incomplete manner. In addition, they may see that seemingly mundane and innocuous forms for recordkeeping may not fully embody the values of their center, and as a result create dissonance among administrators', tutors', and student writers' expectations and goals or a misalignment of the help student writers truly expect from a visit to the writing center and the help assumed they need. While discussing the survey and interview methods, I present brief overviews of each writing center administrator that consented to an interview and their center. After introducing those participants, I conclude this chapter by reviewing how data was collected and recorded at this stage of the dissertation study. At the end of this chapter, readers will better understand how this data will be used to answer the research questions through detailed analysis in Chapter 4.

## **Design Overview**

Studies on genre use tied to workplace identity within writing center studies are limited to analyses of the content produced by student writers and tutors in session reports and satisfaction surveys, as well as talk-in-interaction during a session (Carino & Enders, 2001; Raymond & Quinn, 2012; Malenczyk, 2013; Thompson & Mackiewicz, 2014; Hall, 2017). A detailed, more

rigorously integrated study on the intended use of these forms, their actual use, and the factors that contribute to their design and revision is absent from the literature.

Using genre analysis and focused interviews, I document the various iterations of data collection instruments, the appointment form and client report form, and then discuss those from the vantage point through which writing center administrators see and understand how they, their tutors, and the student writers they serve make use of those forms and the information collected. Surveys allow administrators to report essential institutional context and the basic ways and means of how their center operates, as well as how their experience has shaped the design of these forms. In addition, the surveys allowed for copies of writing center forms to be uploaded, such as an appointment form, a client report form, and any contextualizing document like a training manual or handbook that describes how these forms are used. Asking writing center administrators to provide forms used in their centers was crucial to this study because it provided tangible artifacts to help qualify their design elements, the information collected, and how they are presented to student writers and tutors.

Interviews allow for administrators to offer broader stories, examples, and anecdotes that better clarify and demonstrate how the information collected from and about student writers serve the interests of the center and the needs of the institution. Interviews also provide a platform for writing center researchers to understand the constraints and limitations administrators experience in day-to-day operations, in tutor training, and in the development of workshops and other resources for student writers, all within the context of the work expected of them inside and outside the realm of their administrative role (Driscoll & Perdue, 2014; Caswell, Grutsch McKinney, & Jackson, 2016).

Since this is a study of the intersection of administrative and institutional values, collection of assessment data, and recordkeeping, participants involved represent a range of time in their roles, experience in other centers, institutional setting, and proximity to student writers. The data collected from the focused interviews address the research questions by honing in on administrators' roles in developing documents for information collection, the people who have access to that information, the various audiences for which the forms are intended, and how that information serves them, their consulting staff, faculty, student writers, and institutional stakeholders. In tandem with administrators' responses from the survey, audio transcripts from the focused interviews aid in unpacking what information is most useful to them, how it is used, what factors shape how that information is collected, and what revisions to forms took place and why. Triangulating data collected from the survey, artifacts, and interviews lays the groundwork for constructing a broad picture of how appointment forms and client report forms allow writing center work to happen and recur consistently, including its reach towards faculty and other stakeholders in the institution. In the following section, I review the survey methods and then introduce the interview methods.

### **Broad-Scale Study: Collecting Survey Responses and Generic Artifacts**

To best capture a bigger picture of how writing centers use forms in their workplace, a survey was designed to address what forms are used, their medium, their intended audience(s) how they have been revised over time and in response to what circumstances (see Appendix A). The survey included 18 questions and was created to be analyzed in conjunction with focused interviews with writing center administrators intended to take place after the electronic survey was distributed via email. I sent out a call for participants through the WCenter listserv, and I

also contacted writing center practitioners (WCPs) in centers outside the U.S. directly to ensure a diverse sample from multiple cultural and institutional contexts. To represent as many diverse writing centers embedded in different institutional models as possible, I recruited participants from:

- Secondary schools
- High schools
- Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs)
- Four-year PhD granting public
- Four-year PhD granting private
- Four-year undergrad public
- Four-year undergrad private
- Two-year colleges

Due to the number of varied survey responses, not all of these institutional types are represented in this study. The survey asked information about the participant's institutional type, their title and amount of time they have been in their position, as well as details about their center's forms and recordkeeping practices. Survey questions can be broken down into these sections:

- background information,
- how student writers make appointments and what are the kinds of appointments offered at the center,
- what forms are used and who has access to them, and
- administrators' roles in designing and revising forms.

Section one included four questions that asked participants for the name of their institution, its type, their job title, and how long they have been in their position. Section two had two questions about the kinds of appointments (e.g. face-to-face, walk-in, synchronous online, asynchronous online, scheduled in advance), and the methods available for student writers to make appointments. Section three had three questions that asked more specifically how forms were used in the center, the audience for the forms, and who has access to them. Finally, section four had six questions asking if they designed the forms, what informed their design, how often forms are revised, examples of recent revisions made. At the start of the survey, consent was asked, and

participants were informed of their rights through a consent form that was IRB-approved (see Appendices B and C). They were also made aware that they were not obligated to answer all questions, and that they could withdraw from the survey at any time if those so chose. Although 50 administrators completed the survey within the allotted window of time, the total number of people who received the survey through listservs and targeted recruitment cannot be accounted for.

At the conclusion of the survey, participants were asked to upload three artifacts. The written workplace genres I collected include:

- appointment/intake forms, either physical documents or their analog native to WOnline, TutorTrac, or other web-based software
- client report forms for session notes integrated in WOnline or similar physical form
- tutor handbooks/manuals developed for use in this particular center

Whereas other forms exist, I selected these forms because they are likely to be the most common ones developed to maintain a consistent and functioning workplace: recordkeeping, training, and articulating policies and procedures for using these forms. For the genre analysis component of the study, artifacts were collected from the 50 participants who consented to take the survey: 30 intake forms, 27 client report forms, and 10 contextual documents. Writing centers that did not provide all three artifacts were still considered for participation, as some centers, by design, may not use/have all three. The survey helped contextualize the documents and the writing center space. Participants were also invited for follow up interviews to take place after the artifact analysis to better discern these forms *intended* use; consent was asked in the survey, and a space was provided for their preferred method of contact.

To better understand the corpus of data collected from the survey, I exported each participant's responses as a PDF and printed them along with the artifacts they submitted. These hard copies were compiled into packets, one for each participant. I consolidated data from each

packet by creating a profile sheet that fit all of the responses on one sheet of paper for easy reference, and each packet was assigned a participant identifier — a number from 1-50 (see Fig. 1 as an example).

**Fig. 1: Profile Sheet Example**

1

**Example College**  
US; Private university; four-year undergraduate and graduate degree granting,  
**Participant Profile** Professor/Writing Center Director, 12 years in role

<b>Appointments Offered</b>	F2F	ONLINE-A	SCHED	WALKIN
<b>Data Acquisition</b>	DIGITAL			
<b>Primary Audience</b>	ADMIN	TUT	FAC	
<b>Accessible to</b>	ADMIN	TUT		

**Forms designed by participant. Revised every 2-4 years as needed.**  
**Informed design:** Research into the categories included on other writing center forms (published as LeCluyse, "The Categories We Keep." Praxis 10.2: <http://www.praxisuwc.com/lecluyse-102>)

**Last Revision to APP** I changed the scale on the self-efficacy measure used on the appointment form to 10-point increments, as indicated by Bandura. Previously we asked for students to enter a number from 0 to 100. The change was to make results more accurate.

**Last Revision to REP** I added an internal notes field so that consultants could share information of concern when working with a particular writer. This field is not included in the note sent to instructors.

**Evolution of Forms** Migrating from an Access database of my own design, which replaced the paper forms used by my predecessor, to WOnline.

I read through each packet containing the profile sheet, artifacts, and interview transcripts several times to identify emerging patterns and created tentative codes for them that were revised as new patterns were discovered. This method allowed me to recursively make connections and tease out meaning to refine the codes that would best reveal relationships and disruptions across all qualitative study data. A description of the coding schemes used in this study is detailed later in this chapter.

### **Coding Survey Data**

Open coding was also used for the artifact analysis, identifying what information is asked for in the client report form, such as demographics, course information, assignment information, and questions related to the writing process and the purpose of the writer's visit. The same method was used for the client report form. Following the broad scope coding that lead to an early analysis, I determined the salient features of these genres, looking at each prompt as a written utterance, their nature as directives or solicitations, and the ways that users are able to respond (e.g. open-ended questions, closed-ended questions). Tutor manuals, handbooks, and the policies and procedures described therein acted as supplemental, contextual documents to aid with analysis. This data was useful in determining how administrators dictate the ways that tutors interact with these forms. This analysis helped address research question 2 (forms' intended use) and establish a baseline for answering research question 3 (forms' actual use) with the help of interview data.

The nature of these forms as physical documents or as technologically mediated genres was also a factor that informed this study. Therefore, artifacts were coded according to whether they exist as paper forms, as part of WOnline, or as part of another web-based appointment



tracker. As WCOOnline was the most common type of artifact and suggested language for its forms is provided by the service, I decided that it would be one of the three categories for medium. This information was included on the profile sheet to better assess if centers preferred using paper forms, electronic forms, or a combination of the two; this feature helped determine how prompts and questions were structured, and more importantly, how student writers and tutors would see and interact with them. In addition, the medium of the form would give some indication of how much time users would spend completing them. For example, a paper form with many open-ended fields requiring lengthy written responses would require more user engaged participation than an electronic form with tick boxes.

Additional insight into what informed design of the forms, however, was needed to make sense of how these forms are actually used, and have been used, in practice. In order to understand the administrative perspective on how sessions are conducted in their center and their documentation practices, participants were asked for follow up interviews, which I describe in the next section.

### **Focused, In-depth Analysis: Interviews**

To gain additional layers of data for this study, I conducted interviews with writing center administrators and staff to flesh out these genres' *intended* use, how they change over time, what new genres were introduced and when, and which ones were abandoned and why (see Appendix D). In addition, this data helped me to determine how these forms are *actually* used in the space: research question 3. Of the 49 participants who consented to follow up interviews, 10 survey participants were randomly selected and contacted via email requesting a 20–30 minute interview by phone or video conference. Within one week, only three had responded. To complete my data set, I emailed another round of 10, six of which replied agreeing to an

interview. These nine participants make up 18% of my survey respondents (50), a representative sample for a more focused, in-depth analysis of the ways administrators see appointment forms and client report forms in use. Subsequently, interviews were scheduled, audio recorded, and then later transcribed for analysis. The following is a brief description of the nine participants interviewed for this study<sup>4</sup>:

- **Matt**: A director of a writing center for 10 years at a private U.S. university that grants undergraduate and graduate degrees.
- **Eve**: A student services coordinator of a writing center for 12 years at a U.S. community college.
- **Katrina**: A writing center coordinator for five years at a public U.S. university that grants undergraduate and graduate degrees.
- **Nico**: A writing center director for eight years at a private U.S. university that grants undergraduate and graduate degrees.
- **Desiray**: An academic director of a writing center for 9.5 years at a public Canadian university that grants undergraduate and graduate degrees.
- **Jane**: An assistant director for 2.5 years at a discipline-specific writing center within a large R1 public university in the U.S. that grants undergraduate and graduate degrees.
- **Mo**: A writing support services coordinator at the writing center for three years at a private U.S. university that grants undergraduate and graduate degrees.
- **Fisher**: A co-director and educational developer for 12 years at a public Irish university that grants undergraduate and graduate degrees.
- **Susan**: A director of a writing studio for nine years at a private U.S. university that grants undergraduate and graduate degrees.

To sum up, a preliminary open coding analysis took place first from the survey, followed by the artifacts collected from participants during the survey, and then follow-up interviews were conducted with writing center administrators involving questions that evolved from the initial survey analysis. In the next section, I provide a summary of the methods used and introduce the participants interviewed before describing how data was collected and recorded.

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<sup>4</sup> Names of participants have been replaced with pseudonyms.

## **Summary of Study Method**

This study uses survey and interview methods to account for the wide range of documentation practices across writing centers and to discern their variations. Both of these methods provide data for answering the research questions guiding this study. In addition to the survey, nine administrators consented to participate in focused telephone interviews. The data collected from these interviews offers a way to analyze administrators' perceptions of how they, their staff, and their student writers use forms in the center. Participants were audio recorded as they responded to questions, providing data on the factors that informed the design of intake and client report forms. In the next section, I provide a description of the interview participants and the process through which they were recruited at this stage of the study. Following a discussion of the participants, I explain how the interview data was collected and subsequently analyzed.

## **Data Collection and Data Records**

The data collected during the course of this study included survey responses, audio recorded interviews, transcriptions of those interviews, and three blank workplace genres:

1. Appointment/intake form
2. Client report form
3. Contextualizing document (handbook, manual, or website screenshot describing how these forms are used)

These data points helped to answer the research questions that anchor this study. For the survey, data was collected through Qualtrics and was sent out on WPA-L, EATAW, WCENTER, and EWCA listservs. In addition, I used contact information on the University of St. Cloud Writing Center Directory to target all non-U.S. institutions listed there — about 400 total — as well as some randomly selected high school writing centers. Participants had from November 13, 2018 until December 3, 2018 to complete the survey. For the in-depth interviews, data was collected

by phone and was recorded using Hindenburg Journalist Pro computer software. The audio was exported and archived locally on my home office computer, as well as on an external hard drive. Transcripts were labeled according to the corresponding participant number on the survey profile sheet along with a pseudonym. Audio files were reviewed on a Mac computer through Quicktime, and the audio was transcribed in Word; text files were also stored locally on my home office computer and external hard drive for backup recovery if necessary.

In the following section, I describe how the audio interview data was collected from participants recruited at this level of the study. After discussing the data collection process, I elaborate on how the data was coded and subsequently analyzed.

## **Interviews**

Data collection took place from February 12, 2019 – March 8, 2019. Ten participants were chosen at random and contacted by email for an interview. Only three responded and agreed, so a second round of ten random participants were contacted, and six gave consent to be interviewed. Coordinating across time zones and conflicting schedules proved difficult, but all nine interviews were conducted without error. Calls were recorded by a condenser microphone suspended above an iPhone with the “speaker” feature enabled. The duration of each interview varied from 18 minutes to 57 minutes, depending on participants’ availability and how thoroughly they chose to answer questions.

**Table 1: Interview Transcript Counts**

Matt	1,297 words
Eve	2,072 words
Polly	2,110 words
Nico	1,114 words
Ricardo	1,004 words
Jane	1,516 words
Mo	2,088 words
Fisher	3,203 words
Susan	1,991 words
Total words: 16,395	

Interviews were conducted to provide additional context for survey data and to explain how administrators, tutors, and student writers interact with intake forms and report forms. In the next section, I detail my approach to coding survey, artifact, and interview data and the three schemes created for analysis.

### **Data Organization and Coding**

Survey responses, artifacts, and interviews were all included in the analysis for this study. Data collected in Qualtrics (survey responses and artifacts) were exported to PDF documents and printed for coding. Audio recorded interviews were transcribed and printed as well. Survey data provided an overview of how writing centers document sessions, and interviews provided

additional context for the design of the artifacts submitted. Interviews were transcribed in Microsoft Word and saved offline.

Coding and analysis were approached with the intention of triangulating survey, artifact, and interview data. After my preliminary analysis of the large data set and developing a consistent coding system based on emerging patterns, the core variable that came up most frequently and that anchored all six research questions was audience. Effective technical and professional writing relies on audience awareness, and looking at these forms as pieces of writing and how administrators frame or perceive those intended audiences is the key to answering all six research questions in this study. Therefore, three coding schemes were developed with audience as a shared consideration:

1. genre use (RQ 2 and 3)
2. genre design (RQ 4), and
3. genre revision (RQ 5 and 6).

In the next sections, I describe the three coding schemes, their rationales, and how they serve to address this study's research questions.

### **Genre Use Coding Scheme**

The coding scheme for genre use was designed to identify if a disconnect exists between how forms are actually used and how they are intended to be used per the writing center administration. The reasons behind a misalignment of use may be better illuminated by the administrators themselves, but a cursory look at the survey data suggested a multiplicity of audiences for the forms they provided in the survey, which in turn implied forms were serving the needs of those audiences in different ways. The same forms have various purposes as they change hands from student writers to tutors to administrators and whether they go on to faculty.

As a basis for coding the larger data set, I began by noting on the profile sheet the audience(s) for the appointment form and client report form, and then I marked who has access to those forms. From that point, I extrapolated from patterns of use how these forms were expected to function and for whom (see Table 2). This scheme was used to code the profile sheet, artifacts, and interview data.

**Table 2: Genre Use Coding Scheme (RQ 2 and 3)**

<b>Open Code</b>	<b>Properties</b>	<b>Example of Participants' Words</b>
Administrative needs	Seeking accreditation Acquire/retain funding Annual reporting Assessing student outcomes Assessing tutor performance Developing tutor training Recordkeeping	"what our needs might be in the coming year" "I'm not sure if I'm always getting an accurate picture" "a wishy-washy answer that doesn't give us anything"
Tutor needs	Self-reflection Objective reporting Employment expectation	"They tells us where we have gaps in training" "identify trends ... for training"
Faculty needs	Visits for extra credit Insight on student writers' progress/process Proof of required visits	"Proofs of purchase" "If students are actually coming or not" "Evidence that writers are investing in growing"
Student writer needs	Articulating goals Self-reflection One-time/Long-term help Making them feel comfortable Giving them agency Providing more tailored support	"Defeat the writing center's reputation as a grammar fixer" "effectiveness of the center's services and resources" "My consultants would love it if they gave detailed feedback" "we use that information from forms on them is to be able to develop resources" Can we help faculty "get more comm based assignments in particular classes?"

This scheme brings together audience, access, and needs served to construct a picture of how forms are used in a session, the writing center workplace, and the institution; however a second scheme was created to understand the forms themselves as documents, which I detail in the next section.

### **Genre Design Coding Scheme**

The nature of the forms themselves was a necessary layer to draw connection between the design, language, layout, format, and medium and the needs these forms were communicating or fulfilling. With the hypothesis that these forms have an impact on users without additional human intervention, a coding scheme was made to analyze genre design and performativity to answer research question 4: What do these genres do on their own, removed from authorship or creator(s)? In other words, what agency do they possess? I first needed to qualify the interaction the forms themselves seem to initiate: what is “spoken” by the writing center through forms, and what is the writing center asking student writers and tutors to think or feel through their interaction with these forms. To answer RQ 4, I conducted an initial analysis to typify the information asked for in appointment and client forms:

- Student writer information
- Course information
- Project information
- Process/goal information

I then marked each prompt as a solicitation or directive to label the speech-act utterance. Finally, I noted the conditional response type for each utterance as either open or closed. In line with the bodies-conscious approach established in Chapter 2, these codes helped to illuminate user investment on both the appointment form and client report form, as well as if and/or how student writers and tutors are prompted to talk about or reflect upon themselves as writers and to what



degree; this helped to distinguish between limited and invested interaction in information acquisition and to see what is merely “clinical” information for recordkeeping: demographics, course information, and project information. An asterisk was written by prompts that appeared once or in limited number to analyze as examples of outliers. This scheme was used to code only the artifacts uploaded by survey participants (see Table 3).

**Table 3: Genre Design Coding Scheme (RQ 4)**

<b>Open Code</b>	<b>Prompt Type</b>	<b>Response Type</b>	<b>Properties</b>	<b>Example of Wording on Forms</b>
Student writer information	Solicitation Directive	Open Closed	Name Year Email Major	What is your major? Have you been to the writing center before? Provide your student email address.
Course information	Solicitation Directive	Open Closed	Course name Course number	What course is this assignment for? Is this a required visit?
Project information	Solicitation Directive	Open Closed	Type of assignment Assignment guidelines	Reflective essay Lab report Literary analysis Master's thesis Due Thursday
Process/goal information	Solicitation Directive	Open Closed	Where in writing progress Goals, concerns, objectives	What brings you to the writing center today? What are your goals for this session? Where are you in the writing process? Describe how far along you are with this assignment. I want to work on in-text and/or bibliographic citations.
Meeting information	Solicitation Directive	Open Closed	Session type Session description Internal notes	Which of the following aspects of writing did you address during the consultation? Do you want to have a copy of this report sent to your instructor?

The genre design coding scheme aided in understanding what the documents themselves communicated and asked for on behalf of the writing center to student writers and tutors. In

addition, this scheme helped to make sense of *how* that information was asked for or communicated through the types of responses users were able to provide — clicking through pre-populated, possible responses versus an open field for more detailed, yet possibly uncountable, information to be used in a session or simply for recordkeeping purposes.

Although taking into account how these forms are used and the nature of their design/structure proved useful in analysis, it was important to learn how and if these forms had changed over time and ultimately what lead to those changes. Therefore, a third and final coding scheme was created to track revisions of these forms to triangulate the survey, artifact, and interview data.

### **Genre Revision Coding Scheme**

As workplace practices evolve in the writing center as the result of acute observation and assessment, so do the forms used to enact that work. The coding scheme for revision of genre and practices was important for answering my remaining research questions pertaining to which genres are introduced, abandoned, and for what reasons. This aspect of how genres are used and evolve over time provided a rationale for the design of the forms uploaded to the survey, as well as insight into what limitations or constraints hinder or enable the ways in which student writers and tutors interact with the appointment form and client report form.

As participants in the survey and interviews are writing center administrators, their perceptions and justifications for alterations to their forms give a specific lens through which they view the relationship between bodies and the forms they use. In reviewing the survey data, I noticed a few trends in the reasons for revisions, and they tended to correlate to a change in need or a recalibration for a particular audience or audiences. Even the smallest changes tended to

reflect a desire to serve a specific population in a more productive way, either across the university or in the center itself. As a result, I developed five open codes for drawing connections to the artifacts and their use(s) as described by the participants in this study (see Table 4).

**Table 4: Genre Revision Coding Scheme (RQ 5 and 6)**

<b>Open Code</b>	<b>Properties</b>	<b>Example of Participants' Words</b>
No change	Form is unalterable Feels there is no need	"I get what I need from the form as it is"
Changed for tutors	Shorter, streamlined so staff completes them Field to add part of session to discuss more in training/staff meetings Field to add "hidden" concerns about writers, such as noting aggressive behavior	"I eliminated some questions just so my staff would actually write the reports" "In meetings, our advisors said they noticed things in sessions they wanted to talk about during the semester, so we added a field for that in WOnline"
Changed for student writers	Bilingual text Adding option for preferred pronouns	"We borrowed inclusive language from another university we work with"
Changed for administrators	Changes for assessment Changes in privacy/security policy; what info can be collected and/or how	"Needed more information on ESL students for a grant" "We couldn't collect certain information from students anymore after a law passed in September"
Changed for faculty	Automatically submit report without student writer permission	"Professors, to put it mildly, wanted to police their students more outside the classroom"

This third coding scheme concerning revision of forms and practices was used on survey and interview data only, as any revisions made to the artifacts would not be evident without contextual information. Learning the reasons behind any changes to these forms provided some idea of what revisions were made and for whose benefit, hence why audience remains a consistent part of this coding scheme.

### **Summary of Genre Use, Genre Design, and Genre Revision Coding Schemes**

Three coding schemes were developed for analyzing the larger data set of surveys, artifacts, and interviews. The coding scheme for genre use was used to study alignment or misalignment between how forms are intended to be used and how they are actually used in practice. A second coding scheme was constructed to analyze the generic features of the appointment form and client report form to identify the kinds of information a writing center asks for and the various ways those questions and prompts are presented to student writers and tutors who use them. Finally, a third coding scheme was used to address how these forms change over time in a particular center and why, shedding light on what changes were made, why, and for whom. All three schemes extend from the notion that these documents were created for multiple audiences and purposes, and the informed design of these forms reflect the complexities of how those bodies interact with these forms.

### **Conclusion**

Surveys and interview methods were used in this study to answer six research questions:

1. In what ways do these blank, written workplace genres mediate relationships and identities in the writing center?
2. What are these genres' intended use?
3. How are these genres actually used?

4. What do these genres do on their own, removed from authorship or creator(s)? In other words, what agency do they possess?
5. How do these genres change over time in a particular center?
6. What new genres are introduced and when, and which ones are abandoned and why?

The survey data and interview data were analyzed in tandem with artifacts uploaded by participants: an appointment form, client report form, and any supplemental handbook or manual to contextualize their use in the center. The survey provided information about the institutional context and the participants themselves, as well as what forms are used in their centers, how, and the ways in which they have changed over time, if at all. Artifacts served as a rich source for analyzing how they are presented to tutors and student writers, what information is asked of them, and how. Lastly, interviews helped to detail out how forms were intended to be used and how they are actually used in the center, as well as to give a clearer picture of revisions that have taken place and the reasons behind those changes. These methods allowed me to construct a more robust understanding of the relationship between seemingly mundane workplace forms and the people who interact with them on a daily basis.

The methods used to make sense of the large data set required a time-based framework to understand who interacts with these forms and when. Using an activity/discourse event framework in Chapter 4, I trace how these forms establish interaction with student writers and how the structuring of utterances co-constitute their writerly identity before, during, and after their session. The relationship between tutors, writers, and the uttering, disembodied writing center comes into existence and is maintained through these written workplace genres, which has implications for the writing center field at large that I discuss in Chapter 5.

## **CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS AND ANALYSIS**

### **Introduction**

At the beginning of Chapter 1, I explained how my journey in writing center work began with a flight to San Diego for the International Writing Centers Association conference, and how, from that moment, understanding perspective would play a pivotal role in my research, including this study. I believe much of the work conducted and written about in writing center studies largely hinges on the administrative perspective — how they envision that work being carried out versus the way it looks in practice — and how administrative work is theorized in the scholarship (Lerner, 2000; Gofine, 2012; Geller, Eodice, Condon, Carroll, & Boquet, 2006; Geller & Denny, 2013; Caswell, Grutsch McKinney, & Jackson, 2016; Perdue & Driscoll, 2017). The results presented in this chapter may be absent of tutors', student writers', and faculty's own input and vantage points, but I was mostly interested in how administrators see forms and documentation working among those various stakeholders because they are the decision makers and gatekeepers who are ultimately in control of shaping these forms' use, design, and revision.

In this chapter, I focus on the results and analysis of the survey and interview data collected to answer the research questions provided in previous chapters. Using this body of data, I argue that writing centers prioritize administrative needs over those of student writers, even though from their perspective the forms are designed for data collection and recordkeeping to ultimately create stronger learning support. Bodies and forms get folded into that support system, escaping administrators' attention. Evident in the surveys, artifacts, and interviews is a desire to be more bodies-conscious — some administrators expressed that they would like to better understand why student writers come to the center and to tailor workshops and services for those needs, but that does not fully play out in practice because most administrators indicated that they

think little about the forms themselves, which are the instruments used to collect that information. Looking specifically at the appointment forms and client report forms and how they are used in the writing center workplace, I analyzed these genres in terms of use, design, and revision to determine how much attention these forms are given by administrators.

I begin by presenting a representative example of one writing center and its documentation practices to illustrate how bodies interact with forms in that space. Survey, artifact, and interview data from that site were incorporated into a structured interaction framework composed of five activities beginning with student writer filling out an appointment form to a tutor completing a client report form. This framework was used to create context for use, design, and revision in one writing center to show how all of these pieces fit together and to help answer the research questions guiding this study. Next, I introduce three data sets — surveys, artifacts, and interviews — to demonstrate what the data suggests in a following discussion. I then bring together the findings to answer the six research questions:

1. In what ways do these blank, written workplace genres mediate relationships and identities in the writing center?
2. What are these genres intended use?
3. How are these genres actually used?
4. What do these genres do on their own, removed from authorship or creator(s)? In other words, what agency do they possess?
5. How do these genres change over time in a particular center?
6. What new genres are introduced and when, and which ones are abandoned and why?

My data analysis suggests that administrators give little consideration for the design of appointment forms and client report forms in terms of how student writers interact with them and how they will be used to serve those writers in a more effective capacity. In addition, my findings reveal that administrators are likely to be more concerned about the information student writers and tutors provide on these forms and how it is used in assessment, sustaining funding, and institutional reporting. Lastly, my analysis indicates that little to no revision of these forms



take place, therefore suggesting that few administrators test and adjust for user experience or see a need to make improvements or alterations based on the evolving needs of tutors or student writers.

### **A Representative Example of Writing Center Documentation**

Taking into account the total speech situation of a writing center session, meaning the moment a student writer makes an appointment to the moment a client report is completed, it can be broken down further into a series of connected activities and events that begin and end with the writer (see Table 5). I introduce the selected writing center — renamed the Writing Center at Crystal Lake (WCL) for this case study — in the next section. Given my sample, the WCL was chosen as the most common iteration of a writing center workplace because of its design, procedures, and leadership structure. Writing centers that use a scheduling and recordkeeping approach will likely operate similarly, although with some expected variation. In consideration of the positionality of this data, it is worth mentioning that the case study is read and interpreted through my and the director's perspectives, as there is no student writer input to supplement it.

**Table 5: Structured Interaction with Forms at the Writing Center at Crystal Lake**

<b>Activity</b>	<b>Participants</b>	<b>Description of Activity</b>
I	Student Writer - WC	The student writer initiates interaction by choosing to make an appointment and is prompted to provide demographic information, details about the assignment, and statements about their goals in relation to the writing process
II	WC - Tutor	The tutor may review the student writer's input, which has been recontextualized through the practice of completing the form
III	Tutor - Student Writer	The session itself; goals are renegotiated
IV	Tutor - WC	After the session concludes, the events of the session are reported by the tutor, a narrative recontextualized through the form for student writer, instructor, and WC administrators as multiple audiences
V	WC - Student Writer	The tutor's report is distributed to the writer, and if requested, the instructor

Even though this framework ignores the materiality of the writing center space, I developed it as a way to bracket the space itself as part of a chain of agentic and epistemic mediations. In each activity, with the exception of Activity III, is a pair of participants making meaning with or responding to each other entirely through written communication. Each activity gives rise to the other, and in the process, the student writer's intentions are made malleable by the kinds of information they provide, which affects the outcome of the session and the way the writing center understands what took place during the meeting. This framework helps to show how workplace genres mediate interaction and identity, thus creating a more comprehensive supplement to the answers to my research questions. Based on this slice of survey and interview

data from WCL, I provide a walkthrough of these stages as the bodies of stakeholders interact with forms after introducing the site.

### **Introducing the Writing Center at Crystal Lake**

The Writing Center at Crystal Lake is located in a public, four-year university that grants undergraduate and graduate degrees. The center offers face-to-face and online sessions by appointment or by walking in, and it has a staff of eleven peer tutors. Katrina, the director, has been in her role for 9.5 years.

Before moving to WOnline a few years ago, WCL used appointment tracking software designed for small businesses called Appointy. Post-tutoring documentation, however, took place on a paper form. Previously, this happened through Microsoft Sharepoint. Student writers were asked to take 2-5 minutes at the end of the tutoring session to do some self-reflection, the input of which was sent directly to Katrina, who prepared year-end reports based on that data. Now, WOnline handles both forms and data, but getting the design right has been tricky:

Students don't have the option to ignore questions, and it's a relatively short form, however, it's kind of hit or miss that students fill out the more detailed questions, so I'm not sure if I'm always getting an accurate picture. And some students may feel obligated to fill in the comment section, but they may be in a rush to get to class or they might not understand how to articulate it, and then sometimes students just leave them blank or write something that's just a wishy-washy answer that doesn't give us anything.

Appointment forms and report forms are instrumental for Katrina to figure out strengths and weaknesses in the services her center offers. For instance, if student writers repeatedly remark they wanted help with grammar, but they realized that better understanding the genre conventions of a memo was more helpful, that tells Katrina there may be a need for more memo writing workshops. Student writers may say they largely have a good experience but their tutor did not know how to write a lab report: "Those forms also can be brutally honest. They tell us

where we have gaps in training.” That tells Katrina and the other administrators that genre-based training may be necessary for the tutoring staff. Thirdly, these forms provide insight into student writers who are not native speakers of English and the effectiveness of the center’s services and resources designed for them. “Our full-time staff is very close knit,” Katrina stated, “and we have a kind of a policy of transparency. What we do is identify trends we see on our forms and we like to pass those off to our tutors during training.” As for the forms themselves, I will discuss those in relation to the structured interaction framework introduced in this chapter.

### **Activity I: The Student Writer Responds to the Appointment Form**

The appointment form in use at the Writing Center at Crystal Lake<sup>5</sup> (WCL) is an electronic form integrated into WCLOnline, designed exclusively for writing center appointment tracking and archival purposes. About 80% of appointments are booked directly through this system, and the remainder are booked either in person or through email. Course information is required, and instructor information is optional. Aside from fields that ask for basic information about the student writer (name, course information, etc.), there are a few open-ended fields pertaining to the assignment, the student writer’s goals, and where they are in the writing process:

- Tell us about your assignment:
- What do you want to work on today?
- Which of your writing skills are you most concerned about?
- Where are you in the writing process?

The writing center, as utterer through the form, does not ask for a description of the assignment. Rather, it is a closed-ended directive prompt that forces a situation: the writing center assumes

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<sup>5</sup> The real name of the institution has been changed.

the writer is coming for help with an assignment for class, even though WCL welcomes “writers with other things not for a class, like scholarship essays, creative writing, [and] journal articles,” according to Katrina. A student writer coming with goals for improving writing skills is excluded by this prompt. These assumptions force the writer to contextualize the text in question (if there is one), limiting the kinds of responses they can provide. Asking “What do you want to work on today?” further forces the writer to articulate a goal or set of goals that can be accomplished during the appointed time. If the writer has not at this point developed an idea of what to do, the appointment form acts upon the writer to come up with one. In a way, the form prepares the writer for their session or consultation by making them adhere to a goal-directed pedagogy to which the writing center subscribes. In Katrina’s view, “the form is designed and the questions are structured to prompt student writers to be self-reflective, an idea that echoes something Susan mentioned in her interview:

Part of it is we need that information, but it also shows reflection ... It gives them a way to talk about their writing and understand what we do before they even get there, but they usually don’t give us much. I’d love it if they gave me detailed feedback. My [tutors] would love it if they gave detailed feedback as well, but I’m not sure that’s always practical.

The practical aspect is an important one because student writers may not have time to fully comprehend and express what is being asked of them in a timely manner. Therefore, opting for “bite-sized” responses expedites the process, but it sacrifices the quality and usefulness of the responses.

The solicitation “Which of your writing skills are you most concerned about?” implies that the writer has some ill-developed skill that is the cause of their writing trouble and ultimately brought them to the WCL. By responding to this prompt, they are admitting to being a concerned writer, which could potentially bring about anxieties the writer did not previously

have. Now, the student writer's abilities and intentions are shaped by the language of concern; they are further asked to select only one option from a bulleted list:

- Getting started/brainstorming
- Developing ideas
- Paragraph development
- Organization
- Transitions
- Citations and formatting
- Proofreading and editing

The provided options orient the student writer to the structure of the writing process as the writing center understands and describes it, but those stages are equated with skills on the form, which could lead to some confusion. The form “teaches” a novice to situate their goals — and now a skill they are concerned about — within that process. In the scaffolding of questions, the next one asks the writer to identify where they are in that process, whether or not that conforms to their goals. The options are fewer now, forcing the student writer to isolate a stage of the process they feel describes their current status:

- Brainstorming
- Drafting
- Revising
- Editing
- Polishing

At this point, we assume the student writer now has an idea of what comprises the writing process and, influenced by their response to the previous question, aligns that skill along a spectrum of activity with which they may not be familiar. The student writer may be inspired to return to the “goals” question and revise their response using the language of the discourse used by the writing center. According to Bakhtin (1987), “[w]hen we select words in the process of constructing an utterance, we by no means always take them from the system of language in their neutral, dictionary form. We usually take them from other utterances, and mainly from utterances

that are kindred to ours in genre, that is, in theme, composition, or style” (p. 87). To put it another way, the utterances of the form provides the student writer with the language of composing their responses, their own utterances, in a way that the writing center, as speaker, desires. The form has subjectivized and brought into being a particular kind of writer, which creates a new social reality that the writing center, the tutor, and student writer participate in for the duration of that singular experience. A student writer’s input paired with the utterances of the form make it a completed form comprised of two “voices.” Whoever reviews this form makes sense of that writer or may make assumptions about them based on that documented interaction; it creates a representation of the student writer, not as they are, but as the co-constructed form presents them, a lens through which a tutor may calibrate their own expectations going into a session, just as the form calibrates a student writer’s expectations and shapes how they see themselves as writers.

## **Activity II: The Tutor Reviews the Appointment Form**

At this point, prior to the session, the tutor looks at the writer’s input and acquires a sense of what the student writer wishes to work on. The blank form has been transformed into a completed one and contains information that has been recontextualized through the sequence of performative utterances of the appointment form. The writer now has goals, a skill they are concerned about, and a place in the writing process—all qualities the tutor may attempt to quickly triage before they sit down with the student writer, if the form is reviewed at all. The writing center has taken ownership of the student writer’s input, and each pair of utterances—the exchange between writing center and student writer—gives the tutor an interpretive lens through which to formulate their own expectations and assumptions prior to the session.

The problem, however, is knowing whether the forms are reviewed by the tutor. In our interview, Katrina estimated that only half of her staff look at the appointment forms beforehand, and that is to get an idea of how long the session will take, or for the most invested tutors, to have an idea of what resources will be useful in the coming session. Katrina also mentioned that she encourages tutors to review past client report forms, although tutors rarely do this:

The main reason tutors tend to look at past reports in advance is that it just helps to see for example that the last time the student came in, they worked on thesis statements, so that gives a tutor an idea of what kinds of things to expect and not do the same thing in every session, which is one of my fears. I drill it, that we have to start with the higher order stuff, but if it's the fourth session on that paper, then let's hope they don't need the same attention to that.

Katrina references the idealized use of these forms and the inability to control their use. Having tutors review notes beforehand might better prepare them for the session, but what if there is not enough time to do that? As tutors work with student writers more, they create patterns that work best for them, which may or may not align with how they are expected to perform in their role. No matter how much administrators try to control the work, they cannot without coming close to micromanaging or policing the staff. Tutors become more adapted to the work over time and innovate when circumstances call for it.

### **Activity III: The Session Between Student Writer and Tutor Begins**

After reviewing the appointment form, the tutor and student writer meet face to face or online, depending on the requested type of meeting<sup>6</sup>. During that 50-minute period of time, the student writer and tutor renegotiate each other's intentions and attempt to come to some

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<sup>6</sup> The Writing Center at Crystal Lake offers synchronous chat-based online appointments.



consensus about how the session will play out and what the student writer will leave with at its conclusion.

#### **Activity IV: The Tutor Completes a Client Report Form**

The tutor sits down to open a client report form that they will use to describe what took place during the session and the nature of the writer's goals, concerns, and plan of revision. The writing center now initiates a series of dialogue prompts to which the tutor must respond, including:

- Length of appointment
- Describe what happened in the session
- Describe the student's revision plan

In providing a summary of the session, the tutor must objectively narrate the events that took place, such as highlights from their discussion and the strategies used to guide the writer toward a revision plan. Even if a plan was not developed during the meeting, the form asks for one, so the tutor must offer one as a kind of recommendation in order to complete the form and move on. Knowing that the form will ask for a revision plan, however, should make the tutor work with the student writer on developing one, thus training the tutor to adhere to this requirement.

#### **Activity V: The Client Report Form is Received by the Student Writer**

Upon completing this form, a series of recontextualizations have occurred. Once this form is distributed to the student writer, instructor (if desired), and the writing center (archived), the discourse event between the student writer, tutor, and writing center is closed. Now, the student writer is left with a receipt of sorts, a narrative of what took place in the session and a plan for moving forward with revision, all which began with their input on the appointment

form. This report serves as a guidepost for what the student writer should do now to improve their text, even if their intention of becoming a better writer got lost in this sequence of activities.

Katrina did not indicate how or if student writers refer to this report in revision, but she did indicate that she works with tutors in quarterly staff meetings to ensure the reports they write are serving multiple purposes by “having the tutors reflect on the session and what worked and what didn’t, but also giving the student a record of what they talked about because not all students take notes or do them very well.” While there is an emphasis on the student writer leaving with new knowledge and the tutor developing stronger tutoring skills, the forms’ use and design have their limitations that administrators should consider due to their complexity of their affect.

The WCL example demonstrates how forms and bodies interact in a time-based framework. Using this rich snapshot as a starting point makes the survey, artifact, and interview data more accessible and contextual. In the next section, I begin discussing the results of this study, beginning with the survey data. I then present the interview data before addressing the research questions at the end of this chapter.

### **Survey Data Results**

Of the 50 consenting participants who completed the survey distributed through the WPA-L, WCENTER, and EATAW listservs, 66 began the survey, but not all had completed it in its entirety. In other words, not all participants answered each question. Open-ended questions towards the end of the survey tended to go unanswered and few participants uploaded artifacts to the survey (see Appendix A). Thirty-nine administrators from U.S. institutions completed the survey, and eleven were from institutions outside the U.S. Many institutional types are

represented in this study (see Table 6), as well as participants who have been in their role for various periods of time, although most have been in an administrative role for less than five years (see Table 7).

**Table 6: Institutional Representation (Survey)**

Four-Year Public Universities; Undergrad Only Granting	2% (1 respondent)
Four-Year Public Universities; Undergrad and Grad Granting	30% (19 respondents)
Four-Year Private Universities; Undergrad Only Granting	10% (6 respondents)
Four-Year Private Universities; Undergrad and Grad Granting	27% (17 respondents)
Community College	10% (6 respondents)
Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs)	3% (2 respondents)
Other	19% (12 respondents)

**Table 7: Administrative Experience Representation (Survey)**

0-5 Years	55% (26 respondents)
6-10 Years	21% (10 respondents)
11-15 Years	17% (8 respondents)
16-20 Years	4% (2 respondents)
More Than 21 Years	2% (1 respondent)

### **Genre Use Results (Survey)**

In order to better understand how the appointment form and client report form function in context, it is important to note the various types of appointments a center offers, as well as the options for student writers to make those appointments. Of the participants who answered the question “What kinds of appointments are offered in your writing center?”, approximately 28%

responded that face-to-face appointments were offered to student writers, and 14% allow synchronous online appointments — participants were asked to check all that apply. The least common appointment type reported was asynchronous online meetings (see Table 8).

**Table 8: Types of Appointments Offered**

Face-to-Face	28% (49 respondents)
Online Synchronous	14% (25 respondents)
Online Asynchronous	10% (18 respondents)
Scheduled in Advance	24% (42 respondents)
Walk-ins	24% (43 respondents)

These appointments are made in different ways, and they can be scheduled in advance or walk-ins are permitted. The majority of participants, about 40%, reported that their centers allow student writers to make appointments online either through WOnline, TutorTrac, or other appointment tracking software. Only 1% of respondents from the survey mentioned using a paper form for appointments. Appointments are also made by phone or in the writing center space, although 20% stated email was also an option for scheduling a meeting with a tutor (see Table 9). Again, respondents could select as many options that apply to their center.

**Table 9: How Student Writers Make Appointments**

WOnline or Other Online Appointment Tracker	40% (38 respondents)
By Phone/In Person	32% (29 respondents)
Email	20% (18 respondents)
Paper Form	1% (1 respondent)
Other	7% (6 respondents)

To make sense of how the appointment form and client report forms are used in making and completing sessions, I coded survey responses according to how they are used to satisfy the needs of writing center stakeholders, including administrators, tutors, faculty, and student writers. The open-ended survey questions from which this data was compiled asked participants to discuss the origins, development, use, and revision of these forms. As these forms perform some type of function or are meant to complete a task, I coded stakeholders' needs to learn how administrators see those forms operating in their center and across the institution. Most responses were assigned one code, but some longer responses addressed two or more stakeholders' needs and were labeled accordingly (see Table 10). For example, "reports are sent to the student and their teacher for transparency about what happened in the consultation" indicated that the forms are used for the benefit of both faculty and student writers.

**Table 10: Genre Use Coding (Survey)**

<b>Code</b>	<b>Indicators</b>	<b>Example of Participants' Words</b>
Administrative needs	50% (63 codes)	"I needed more information about dual enrollment students"
Tutor needs	32% (40 codes)	"data from the form is used sometimes in training"
Faculty needs	6% (8 codes)	"they want proof their students are actually coming to the center"
Student writer needs	11% (14 codes)	"want them to think more about the process and reflect on that"

I marked 125 codes on the survey responses. Again, not all participants answered each question, and most elected not to answer open-ended questions that elicited a written response.

Worth noting is that the data indicates that forms primarily serve administrative needs over the needs of tutors, faculty, and student writers combined. Although in their responses, administrators are speaking from their experience with the forms and how they are used, the data suggests a particular order of prioritized need in terms of their connection to the writing center:

1. Administrators
2. Tutors
3. Student writers
4. Faculty

This order reflects a hierarchical power structure with administrators at the top: tutors work under the administration and serve student writers taking courses with faculty. Another way to look at it is a series of concentric circles with administrators in the center — the closer the stakeholder, the closer the focus on needs. A writing center may claim to be student-centered, for example, but the data in this chapter complicates such a claim. To be student-centered implies a particular orientation to and emphasis on instruction, or at least offering resources to support self-education although "our benevolent motives can hide the ways in which our 'help' may be

interpreted as self-serving and dominant” (Sloan, 2013). Given the sample, data suggests that the minutiae of the writing center workplace sometimes get in the way of its purpose.

Appointment forms and client report forms serve multiple purposes in the writing center workplace, whether it is tracking appointments for institutional reporting, in-house assessment, training, or recordkeeping; however, forms are also in the service of bodies, of moving them through the space and supporting a learning experience, but the needs of student writers are given less attention than those of administrators who completed the survey. The appointment form, for example, is often the first point of contact a student writer has with the writing center, and that initial encounter is vital to establishing a quality relationship between the center and writer. If we take student writers as clients in a service-oriented workplace, then that first getting-to-know-you moment sets the stage for addressing those writers’ needs. Survey data, however, suggests the use of forms are in the service of administrative needs. Participants expressed a range of needs that these forms serve for them in their administrative roles, such as

- “Capturing data helps us to articulate the work we do,”
- “Basic needs, accreditation, evidence,”
- “Funding requirements,”
- “Tracking pilot projects for assessment,” and
- “What I wanted to show to my superiors.”

The frequency of these responses suggests that data from appointment forms and client report forms are used primarily to support administrative work. Use related to tutors’ and student writers’ needs were less articulate, but some indicated that forms provide opportunities for student writers and tutors to reflect on their work before and after a session, implying that although student writers and tutors use the forms, the extent of that use is mere reflection. Perhaps since this survey was conducted within the perimeters of writing center studies, that the use of these forms is understood; it is common knowledge how non-administrators use them.

However limited the survey responses on their own may be, they do provide some idea of how administrators see and understand how writing center work is carried out through these forms outside their own roles.

Additionally, the distance between administrators and tutors, as well as administrators and student writers, is palpable. Even with regard to how faculty use these forms, the most common need participants addressed can be summed up thusly: “We only intend for reports to go to faculty as proofs of purchase that [writers] visited the center.” Although survey responses are from administrators’ perspectives, the needs of other stakeholders seem minimized or not seen within an all-encompassing idea of writing center work. To put it another way, administrators may not fully see the bodies of tutors, student writers, and faculty as integral to writing center work as their own. Any number of pressures may force an administrator into assessing and reporting to justify their center’s existence, to acquire more funding, or to satisfy service requirements for tenure, for example. The needs of student writers and tutors will quickly take a back seat if the personal stakes are high for someone in an administrative role, and the survey data reflects how some of those administrative needs shaped the design of their forms. Given the vast number of duties that administrators must balance and contend with, there is a great deal of labor, especially emotional and intellectual labor, that involves “nurturing, encouraging, and building relationships or resolving conflict” (Caswell, Grutsch McKinney, & Jackson, 2016, p. 25–27). The pressures of “meeting writers where they are” multiply to become an administrator’s “greatest asset and [their] greatest threat,” which spreads their attention thin (Geller & Denny, 2013, p. 124). As administrative responsibilities must take priority, the forms become utilitarian objects, and the design does not take into account the people who use and interact with them.



Findings from my coding of genre use revealed that administrative needs take precedence in the use of these forms for maintaining in-house assessment, institutional reporting, and tutor training, and that few participants detailed how tutors and student writers use forms to carry out the day-to-day work, leading me to believe that some administrators may be more concerned with how appointment forms and client report forms help them in their own work. Focusing more closely at the source, influence, and design of these forms revealed additional insights that I will explain in the next section.

### **Genre Design Results (Survey)**

On the survey, participants were asked for the primary audience(s) for their forms in addition to who has access to those forms once they are completed (see Tables 11 and 12). The reasons this information is important to this study is because they give some indication as to whom the forms are designed for. In order of audience and access priority, the list aligns with findings from the previous section on genre use: administrators, tutors, student writers, and faculty. While the degree of tutors' access is almost the same as administrators', only 12% of participants stated student writers have access to their forms, and 18% reported they are the primary audience. If student writers are asked to complete an appointment form, why are they not its primary audience in this sample? I recognize that this question leaves room for misinterpretation, as participants might have been thinking they were being asked about the audience for the data they collect. In the previous section, I described the administrative needs overshadowing those of tutors and student writers. If those needs are seen as most important, then the forms would be designed to prioritize those first. I will now discuss the findings from coding for genre design.

**Table 11: Primary Audience for Appointment Form and Client Report Form**

Administrators	39% (37 respondents)
Tutors	28% (26 respondents)
Student Writers	18% (17 respondents)
Faculty	15% (14 respondents)

**Table 12: Parties Who Have Access to Appointment Form and Client Report Form**

Administrators	35% (38 respondents)
Tutors	34% (37 respondents)
Student Writers	12% (13 respondents)
Faculty	7% (8 respondents)
Other**	12% (13 respondents)

Sixty-one percent of participants who answered questions on audience and access stated that they created these forms, citing a number of influences and factors that informed the design of the forms (see Table 13). According to my findings, audience was not a strong consideration in the design (9%). Administrative needs, however, most clearly influenced the design of these forms (35%), second only to borrowed models or templates (30%). Participants reported that, if they did not design the forms, they originated from appointment tracker templates (50%) or a previous director or administrator (50%). Sixty-one of participants claiming to have designed these forms themselves does leave some room for interpretation, yet they mentioned some sources, inspiration, or rationale for their design (see Table 13).

**Table 13: Informed Design**

Scholarly Research	13% (3 respondents)	<p>“Reflective practices”</p> <p>“cognitive grounding”</p>
Simplification	4% (1 respondent)	<p>“if it's simple and easier, tutors are more likely to do it”</p>
Models/Inherited Forms	30% (7 respondents)	<p>“My predecessor had a basic form through WConline and I modified it over the years”</p> <p>“Forms from the center I worked in as a graduate student”</p> <p>“I saw a Student Focus Form for Reading at a sister community college and liked the idea of adapting it for our Writing Center.”</p>
Administrative Needs	35% (8 respondents)	<p>“I included information which would help us retain funding”</p> <p>“What I wanted to be able to show my superiors”</p> <p>“Capturing data that might help us articulate the work we do”</p> <p>“Tracking usage, issues, and pilot projects”</p>
Audience	9% (2 respondents)	<p>“We designed each of these forms with our different audiences in mind”</p> <p>“Careful thinking about the purposes and audiences of the documents”</p>
Collaboration with Others	9% (2 respondents)	<p>“Our lead staff met and created it and it evolved over time”</p> <p>“Feedback from tutors/students”</p>

To little surprise, based on findings from genre use coding of the survey data, administrative needs were the primary reason for these forms’ design (35%). Thirty percent who

claimed to create the forms themselves stated the design elements and language were borrowed from either existing forms or templates. Only 13% cited influence from scholarly research, and 4% developed the forms for efficiency. Just two respondents (9%) mentioned taking into account the audience and purpose of these documents, which is an interesting finding because it reveals that, based on the sample for this study, audience and purpose do not factor into forms' design as much as the needs of administrators, a disconnect between theory and practice.

For 4% of participants to say that these forms were created to be completed quickly, it is important to factor in their medium with which bodies interact (see Table 14). Over half of participants indicated WOnline or similar appointment track is used in their center, while 28% use paper forms that are scanned for archival purposes. Another 6% have some sort of digital platform for recordkeeping. One option for response is in retrospect problematic: "journaling/reflective writing (private)," because the medium in which one journals is unclear; however, 10% did mention that long-form writing integral to the design of their writing center forms. Completing forms take time, and a form with a few tick boxes can be completed more quickly than writing out a reflective response on a piece of paper, but having these forms available digitally allows for ease of decentralized recordkeeping and the ability to rapidly generate analytics for reporting and analysis.

**Table 14: Medium of Writing Center Forms**

WOnline/TutorTrac/Other Online Scheduling Software	51% (35 respondents)
Paper Form	28% (19 respondents)
Digital Form (e.g. Google Forms)	6% (4 respondents)
Journaling/Reflective Writing (Private)	10% (7 respondents)
No Documentation Occurs	4% (3 respondents)

Although the design of this dissertation study does not account for the time it takes to complete a form in any one center, the medium may affect user interaction and investment — a focus that may be made easier to analyze based on the collective findings of this study.

The survey data suggests much about how administrators designed these forms to be used in their centers, but I will now discuss the artifacts submitted by survey participants to break down its more granular design elements.

Starting with the appointment form, I had coded them according to recurring types of information each prompt or field asked for: information about their writers themselves, the course, their project, and their writing process (see Table 15). Client report forms tended to be more concise, asking for less information from the tutor about the session (see Table 16).

**Table 15: Information Appointment Forms Ask For (30 Submissions)**

Code	Prompts/Fields	Sample language
Writer	21% (46 codes)	Name
Course	36% (78 codes)	Course and section
Project	16% (35 codes)	Please select from the following options the paper you want to work on
Process	28% (61 codes)	At what state of the process are you in?

**Table 16: Information Client Report Forms Ask For (27 Submissions)**

Code	Prompts/Fields	Sample Language
Writer	26% (6 codes)	Client
Course	26% (6 codes)	What course was this for?
Project	52% (17 codes)	Describe the assignment
Process	17% (4 codes)	What stages of the process did you work on (select all that apply)

The appointment form artifact data indicates more information about the course is asked for than the writer, project, or process (36%), while client report form artifact data included more prompts about the student writer's project (52%). While not explicitly stated by participants in the survey, a possible reason for asking more about the course on an appointment form is for tracking what student writers are seen from particular course and how often. Another reason could be that this information is needed should the instructor request a report or a student writer request a report to be sent to their instructor. Asking more questions about the writers' process (28%), however, suggests that information is most important for tracking and for use in a

session, but whether that information is used by a tutor beforehand cannot be accounted for in this study.

Each prompt or field solicits specific information from the student writer or tutor and in a particular way. For the following discussion, I provide an analysis of the prompt types as either open-ended or closed-ended, solicitations or directives. Open-ended prompts are fields that allow short or long written responses, while closed-ended prompts could be tick boxes or pre-filled drop-down options. Drawing from genre studies analysis, I coded solicitations as questions (e.g. “Where are you in the process?”) and directives as prompts to elicit response (e.g. “Describe where you are in the process?”). The prompts that ask for information from student writers’ and tutors were categorized according to four types (see Table 17).

**Table 17: Prompt Type**

Open-Ended Solicitation	29% (45 prompts)
Closed-Ended Solicitation	42% (66 prompts)
Open-Ended Directive	15% (24 prompts)
Closed-Ended Directive	14% (22 prompts)

Of the prompt types on the artifacts submitted, 42% were closed-ended solicitations, and 29% were open-ended. These questions asked come from not one person “speaking,” but a kind of disembodied voice of the writing center itself. Users, in other words, are responding to a non-entity; in this case, it is in the form of structured questions that ask about the writer, their course, project, and process. Take, for example, a series of questions like:

- What would you like to work on today?
- Where are you in the writing process?
- When is the assignment due?

The audience is unclear to those student writers who must speak back through these forms; therefore, they may be unsure of how to frame their responses because the purpose of the form is ambiguous without someone or something explaining it to a user. To put it another way, there is little to indicate to a student writer how their input will be used. As 71% of prompts are solicitations, this could be considered a move toward approximating more personal questioning for a student writer on an appointment form, for example. Still, the majority of those questions are closed-ended, leaving little room to personalize a response that may better capture the nature of their project or the kind of help they want. Framing prompts as open-ended allows more freedom for student writers and tutors to express their writerly identities, an option that a tick box does not allow. Stock responses may be more helpful to administrators tracking specific types and frequency of assignments or particular goals, but this does not privilege the student writer *as a writer*, which I argue does not align with a bodies-conscious approach. If writing is a form of self-expression and reflective of one's personality and identity, those nuances should be valued as much as the content of the response itself.

The types of prompts that interested me most after my initial analysis pertained to the student writer's process, more specifically those that solicit from student writers their reason for coming to the writing center, to determine the limitations and constraints for them to articulate the purpose of their visit (see Table 18).



**Table 18: Process/Goal Prompt Type**

Open-Ended Solicitation	42% (14 prompts)
Closed-Ended Solicitation	33% (11 prompts)
Open-Ended Directive	15% (5 prompts)
Closed-Ended Directive	9% (3 prompts)

While some forms had more questions about stages of the process and the number of pages written since one's last visit, the reason for the visit is crucial: why is the student writer coming to the center in the first place? The most common version of this prompt is the standard language from the WOnline template, "What do you want to work on today?" Some variations of this type of open-ended solicitation include:

- What motivated you to come into the Writing Center today?
- What goals do you have as a writer?
- What do you want to learn how to do in your session?
- What would you like the tutor to address in this session?
- What area would you most like to focus on?

Other forms asked for this information in open-ended directives like:

- Describe what you want to work on.
- List two priorities (topics, concepts) you would like to cover in this session.
- Please give us more details about what kind of help you need.

Prompts that allowed for the least amount of expression are closed-ended directives, and some examples are:

- What would you like to work on?
  - Understanding assignment
  - Planning or outlining
  - Developing main argument/focus
  - Research and citing sources
  - Organization
  - Sentence structure or conciseness
  - Word choice
  - Grammar
  - Punctuation

- Spelling or capitalization
- I came to the writing center today to work on (please check all that apply):
  - Professional documentation (resume/CV/cover letter/personal statement/etc.)
  - Get citation help (APA/MLA/CMS/etc.)
  - Work on a long-term project
  - Understand the assignment
  - Interpret feedback on my writing
  - Obtain extra credit in class
  - Have someone proofread/edit for grammar on complete drafts
  - Get started on an assignment
  - Obtain objective feedback on content and style
  - Improve overall writing process
  - Improve grade on project
  - Follow the recommendation of a professor
  - Meet a class requirement
  - Work on a digital project
- Describes your writing assignment concerns:
  - I want help getting started on a writing assignment
  - I have trouble organizing my ideas in writing
  - I want feedback on my writing
  - I want to learn revising strategies
  - I want help understanding grammar and mechanics

These closed-ended vary in the kinds of selections student writers can make, and some provide more options than others, but what if a student writer is coming for a different reason? Their goals may get lost because the form was not designed to capture it. Therefore, the response cannot be made useful in a session, if it is recorded at all. Of the three examples of closed-ended directives, the last, although the most limiting, uses language that allows the writer to situate themselves within the response: “I want...”. These kinds of solicitations and directives that ask for a student writer’s purpose for visiting have the most potential to create breakdowns. The purpose may not be clear to the tutor working with the student writers, leading to a timely renegotiation of goals once the meeting begins. Closed-ended prompts may permit the completion of a form in a timelier fashion on the front end, but they may create other problems in the session or should the student writer return in the future.

Three distinct outliers caught my attention while coding these forms' prompts, and they all come from the same form, a paper one designed for administrative use only and created because there was no method of documentation prior to the administrator's arrival:

1. In your own words, what do you think the assignment is asking you to do?
2. Does this assignment you want to work on today remind you of any other assignments you've ever written? Be as specific as possible.
3. What kind of feedback are you seeking today?

Asking the student writer to state in their own words their understanding of the assignment allows them to articulate details that may be more useful in a session, establishing a baseline for the student writer and tutor to work with during their meeting. Otherwise, the tutor may assume the student writer has read and understood the assignment. Also, asking the student writer if the assignment reminds them of another assignment they have worked on does another important thing: it forces them to reflect on and apply genre knowledge. Obtaining those specifics serves the student writer by having them make meaning in that moment. Drawing those connections between the assignment in question and a previous one creates a space for a conversation about transfer and also gives the tutor some insight into what the student writer already knows about the genre of the assignment they wish to work on. Lastly, asking for "what kind of feedback" the student writer wants leaves the response possibilities wide open; they are not constrained by tick boxes with writing terminology next to them. The feedback question works well with the other two to form a more complete picture about what the student writer already knows and needs to know in order to complete the assignment. This is important for a bodies-conscious approach because the design and sequence of questions work seems to be intentional, although that cannot definitively be determined, but this example does demonstrate an awareness of the limitations and possibilities the form affords.

Before moving on to my discussion of the genre revision results, I would like to close by mentioning a few other outliers discovered in the appointment forms and client report forms. First, seven percent of the forms asked for the student writer's preferred pronouns, an inclusive practice that aligns well with a bodies-approach to writing center work. This information may be requested for assessment purposes, but regardless, asking for this information may let a student writer know that this information is important for a tutor to properly address them in the center. This request may also indicate that that information is valued by the center itself, one that recognizes non-binary genders. Second, three percent of forms asked if English was the student writer's home language. Depending on a center's practices and a tutor's approach, this could potentially "other" a student writer by corralling them into an English Language Learner (ELL) category; however, this may also signal to a student writer that they are not expected to be native speakers for the writing center to help them. Again, this question may be included for tracking purposes, but within a bodies-conscious approach, it allows the student writer to express one more facet of their identity, not just their linguistic aptitude. Third, four percent of forms collected for this study asked questions about student writers' confidence level, such as "On a scale of 0-10, how confident are you that you can successfully complete this writing task?" This prompt allows the student writer to weigh in on something that might otherwise go unspoken in a session. Certainly, a tutor may assume how confident a student writer may be after the session is over based on their conversation, attitude, and body language, but asking the student writer themselves allows them to voice one more aspect of their writerly identity: how they feel about the writing they have done and are capable of doing. A follow-up survey may ask how that confidence level has changed, but asking that question the appointment form, the first point of

contact for student writers with the writing center, shows an interest in the student writer's own view of their writing.

In my discussion of the design of the appointment form and client report form genres, I have argued that these forms were designed primarily with administrative needs in mind — also reflected in my analysis of genre use in the previous section — and often do not adhere to a bodies-conscious approach because the ways in which information is solicited and the limitations imposed on student writers' responses. In the next section, I describe my findings after coding for how these genres were revised over time and what led to those revisions.

### **Genre Revision Results (Survey)**

After analyzing how forms are used and designed, I will now discuss the final layer of data needed to learn how these forms evolved over time and how documentation practices have shifted, if at all. Most participants indicated that the forms in their writing center are revised every two to four years (35%), while others revise each academic year or semester, yet 21% stated that no revision has occurred during their time as an administrator (see Table 19).

**Table 19: How Often Forms Are Revised**

Each Semester	19% (9 respondents)
Each Academic Year	25% (12 respondents)
Every 2-4 Years	35% (17 respondents)
No Revisions Have Occurred	21% (10 respondents)

In total, 92% inherited the forms or language suggested by an appointment tracker, revealing that most forms are taken from other sources without adapting them to their student population

unique institutional needs. Much of the information requested may be basic demographics, leaving little room to consider user experience or perhaps even the possibility of surveying for feedback on what can be improved upon to best serve student writers or aid tutors in their day to day work. To better understand participants' purpose for revision to forms, it was necessary to investigate the stakeholders for whom revisions were made (see Table 20).

**Table 20: Genre Revision Coding (Survey)**

Code	Indicators	Example of Participants' Words
No change	36% (12 statements)	"I get what I need from the form as it is"
Changed for tutors	18% (6 statements)	"I eliminated some questions just so my staff would actually write the reports" "In meetings, our advisors said they noticed things in sessions they wanted to talk about during the semester, so we added a field for that in WOnline"
Changed for student writers	9% (3 statements)	"We borrowed inclusive language from another university we work with"
Changed for administrators	30% (10 statements)	"Needed more information on ESL students for a grant" "We couldn't collect certain information from students anymore after a law passed in September"
Changed for faculty	6% (2 statements)	"Professors, to put it mildly, wanted to police their students more outside the classroom"

Analysis of the coded samples for genre revisions revealed the same pattern of priority as found in analyses of genre use and genre design: 1. Administrators, 2. Tutors, 3. Student writers, and 4. Faculty. Again, the most reported reason for adding, deleting, or altering content on a form was

for administrators. In addition, thirty-six percent of participants reported having done no revision to their forms, providing explanations such as they “already get what [they] need” from the form as is, they “see no reason to change it,” or the limitations of their documentation system does not permit changes.

After coding survey responses for how documentation and revision practices have changed, I decided to have a closer look at the last revisions made to the appointment form and client report form to determine which document undergoes more changes over time. In addition, I wanted to know what kind of revision is the most common for each form (see Tables 21 and 22).

**Table 21: Last Revision to Appointment Form and Rationale**

Revision	Indicators	Sample Language
Little to No Revision	19% (6 statements)	Our intake form is extremely basic and has not been revised. we kept it simple to keep the barrier to entry low.
Change of Response Type/Language	28% (9 statements)	Currently we are revising to use more rhetorically grounded language in hopes that students will stop using "flow" and "grammar" in their appt requests
Student/Tutor Focus	22% (7 statements)	We recently added "preferred pronouns" to our intake appointment form to promote more inclusivity and social awareness of gender fluidity
Admin/Faculty Focus	25% (8 statements)	Last year we revisited the data collected in WOnline and revised those questions to align with our research project underway.
Streamlined for Ease of Use	9% (3 statements)	I noticed that it took students several minutes to fill in the form, which seemed unnecessary and inefficient, so I eliminated any questions whose answers we didn't really use.
Other	6% (2 statements)	I added a reminder email.

Nineteen percent of participants had not revised their appointment form, but the most common type of revision observed in the sample was to language of a prompt or the prompt's response type (i.e. tick box, short answer, drop-down). For example, one participant stated their center altered language to be more "rhetorically grounded" so that student writers would not



jump to responses like “flow” and “grammar.” Another mentioned making all response types the same for a more consistent user experience and “standardized format” that took less time to complete.

Two categories for response emerged from coding involving revising for student writers (22%) and revising for administrators (25%); the number of participant responses here was surprisingly about the same. While most participants indicated elsewhere that revisions mostly took place for administrative reasons, when asked specifically about the last revision to the client report form, approximately the same amount of changes were made for both administrators’ and student writers’ benefit. The 15% remaining statements in this sample involved streamlining forms by removing superfluous questions and adding things like reminder emails to the electronic form.

For the last revisions to the client report form, the same patterns emerged in the coding process, but the results are much different. Statements made by participants amounted to a greater share of revisions made for tutors (26%), while 24% accounted for revisions made for administrators and 16% for student writers (see Table 22). As tutors ideally would be the primary audience for the client report form, it makes sense that the majority of revisions would be made for them. As for changes in design, thirteen percent of statements revealed an emphasis on streamlining content or altering language or response type, while 16% percent of responses revealed little to no revision had taken place on the client report form.

**Table 22: Last Revision to Client Report Form**

<b>Revision</b>	<b>Indicators</b>	<b>Sample Language</b>
Little to No Revision	16% (6 statements)	We added a space for students and/or tutors to clarify the specific revision goals for students.
Change of Response Type/Language	8% (3 statements)	We rephrased certain free form questions to encourage consultants to include or emphasize certain kinds of information.
Student Purpose	16% (6 statements)	We added a box so that the student writer could type a narrative about her next steps for revision or study.
Administrative Purpose	24% (9 statements)	We added a "hidden" section where consultants could add comments that would not be viewable by faculty or writers. Mostly to allow for fuller practitioner reflection.
Tutor Purpose	26% (10 statements)	The last revision included a section for tutors to name a part of the session that they wanted to discuss more at training and reasons to do so.
Faculty Purpose	5% (2 statements)	We did add due date recently, at a professor's request.
Streamlined for Ease of Use	5% (2 statements)	Form was modified and reduced to from 12 questions to 8.

Unlike the appointment form, the data suggests that revisions made to the client report form align more closely with its intended audience. Some of the changes mentioned in the survey involved adding a place for tutors to note areas in training they feel they need or internal notes

not to be shared with faculty or student writers. This space provides tutors with an outlet to reflect on their own professional development as a writing center employee and to add to notes about a student writer that might need more specialized attention in future session. Other revisions involved adding assessment criteria for tutors to evaluate “active and independent learning strategies” and to “state with clarity what the client needed to do before returning to talk about the particular assignment that they were working on in the session.” The revisions involving this evaluative component may well help tutors to improve their approaches to working with student writers by prompting them to identify specific strategies observed as well as helping them to develop more effective agenda- or goal-setting practices when they sit down with a student writer. Overall, the revisions participants mentioned in the survey data reflect a shift towards involving tutors more in their workplace training and ongoing professional development, a more purpose-driven and goal-oriented function of the client report form’s design. Participants’ comments did not reflect this same kind of development or awareness on the subject of appointment forms.

As with the appointment form data, some outliers are worth describing, including one involving a move toward inclusive practices. Eight percent (three respondents) stated that the last revision made to their client report form was to allow for the selection of preferred pronouns on the form:

- “to make forms more open to individual choice, such as giving preferred pronouns to use in the session”
- “recently added ‘preferred pronouns’ to our form to promote more inclusivity and social awareness of gender fluidity”
- “We added ‘preferred pronouns’ because some tutors said it would be the right thing to do”

It is unclear, however, if tutors' or student writers' pronouns were being discussed. Still, the reasoning behind those changes are made clear by the participants and do reveal a conscious shift toward being more inclusive in their writing center work.

Another outlier suggests that administrators' awareness of revisions and when they took place may not always be apparent. One participant stated, "I recently came into this position, so I am not sure when these forms were last revised." For someone coming into a new position, that information may not be readily available to them, or they may not be as familiar or comfortable with the writing center to think about revising any of the forms yet. Concerning administrative constraints, this lack of knowledge might be one, or it at least suggests that directors or coordinators may come into a new role where they are asked to justify choices in leadership that they have not personally made.

I would like to offer one final piece of data from the survey from a participant who revised their client report form to "make them more informative/helpful to [their] consultants and to make options line up with client survey forms." Nowhere else in this data set is this explicitly mentioned. Consistency across and alignment between student writers' input on an appointment form and tutors' input on a client report form would be beneficial for all users. First of all, there would be more agreement between forms (i.e. appointment forms and client report forms using the same language, prompt types, and structure); data from one would complement the other. For example, having "What do you want to work on in your session today?" for student writers and "What did the writer work on in this session today?" for tutors would help show if those goals were renegotiated in the session, but the options for response should be the same on both forms. Alignment would also encourage more thought about forms' design, their audiences, and their purposes, as well as how the two documents may work together; this would result in a more

robust architecture for assessment and a user informed design, as well as bring together “theory and practice into alignment — or at least mak[ing] the tensions between them conscious, productive” (Hall, 2017, p. 148).

Learning about and analyzing revision practices is necessary for understanding why content was added, removed, or altered, as well as how appointment forms and client report forms evolve over time in use and design since various stakeholders interact with these forms throughout the writing center workplace. The examples presented thus far in this dissertation provide a limited snapshot of how administrators perceive those forms being used as part of a greater chain of workplace practices. While survey data is limited because of the narrow scope of this study, it is what anchors my argument that these written workplace genres embody administrators’ values and perceptions of writing center work that do not fully account for the bodies of student writers and tutors, but rather the needs of various stakeholders. When presenting and discussing the interview data in the next section, I further expand upon this argument to more effectively answer the research questions developed for this dissertation.

### **Discussion of Survey Data**

Administrators reported in the survey data that they mostly see how forms are used to address their own institutional responsibilities. The data also implied that student writers’ and tutors’ needs are not as instrumental in reporting as they are in figuring out better ways of using forms in day-to-day operations, supporting my claim that appointment forms and client report forms create distance between administrators and the other writing center stakeholders. Administrative needs was the most common factor in genre use due to how that information supports the growth and sustainability of the writing center and the administrators’ position.

Administrative need was also the most frequently reported factor in designing forms (35%), second to borrowing from models or templates (30%). Throughout the survey, administrators also demonstrated that revisions to forms most often occur to address stakeholders' needs rather than usability. It seems that use, design, and revision of forms reflect most prominently what administrators' value, and what they assume others value in terms of reporting, in forms they use.

Survey data suggests how administrators' values are connected to how they view, understand, and talk about writing center forms. Although survey responses, artifacts, and interviews were coded and analyzed according to use, design, and revision, a fourth layer will be introduced to discuss one representative example of how forms and workplace practices interact in a time-based activity framework. Survey data supports the idea that administrators prioritize their own needs (and the needs of their center) over tutors or student writers because of the demands of their institutional role. Appointment forms and client report forms act as a mediator for stakeholders, although administrators did not seem to recognize or be able to articulate that mediation in the survey or interview data.

As evident in the survey results, these findings are also observable in the forms developed for use in their centers, and speaking with some of those administrators provided a deeper look into their rationale for specific uses, designs, and revisions. I discuss the results of the interview data in the next section, followed by an analysis of those interviews.

### **Interview Data Results**

While the survey provides a broad snapshot of administrators' experience with and knowledge about the appointment form and client report form in their center, the interviews aid

in capturing deeper stories connected those experiences. Of the participants who completed the survey, nine were randomly selected and contacted for a phone interview. Questions asked pertained to three areas: 1. audience, access, and values represented in the forms' design, 2. breakdowns and workarounds they have noticed as tutors and student writers complete forms, and 3. How the information collected from forms is used in their center and in institutional reporting. Interviews were audio recorded with consent and then transcribed for analysis.

In this section, I present and discuss the results of the interview data. Following a discussion of the results pertaining to genre use, design, and revision, I discuss how the overall results of this study answer the following research questions:

1. In what ways do these blank, written workplace genres mediate relationships and identities in the writing center?
2. What are these genres' intended use?
3. How are these genres actually used?
4. What do these genres do on their own, removed from authorship or creator(s)? In other words, what agency do they possess?
5. How do these genres change over time in a particular center?
6. What new genres are introduced and when, and which ones are abandoned and why?

The questions are answered based on all findings, taking into account the survey/artifact data and interview data.

### **Genre Use Results (Interviews)**

From a corpus of 16,395 words from nine interview transcripts, 661 statements were coded for genre use (see Table 23).

**Table 23: Genre Use Results (Interviews)**

<b>Open Code</b>	<b>Instances</b>	<b>Sample Language</b>
Administrative needs	31% (205 statements)	I do a big annual report at the end of the year that just gives us a comprehensive view of what our school year look like, what our assessment look like, what our needs might be in the coming year.
Tutor needs	20% (133 statements)	That gives a tutor an idea of what kinds of things to expect and not do the same thing in every session.
Faculty needs	24% (159 statements)	...gives faculty a touchpoint to talk to students about writing even in classes where writing in the central content mastery area
Student writer needs	24% (164 statements)	The way that we use that information from forms on them is to be able to develop resources and refine training so that they can get the best experience possible.

While discussing how the appointment forms and client report forms are used, administrative needs came up most (31%), while 24% of statements in some way addressed the needs of student writers. Twenty-four percent of statements concerned the needs of faculty, and twenty percent accounted for tutors' needs. Although the numbers seem to be fairly consistent across all stakeholders, looking at specific responses to particular questions provided more evidence.

To better understand administrative use, participants were asked what they hoped these forms communicate to student writers and how the information collected from these forms inform their making decisions in the writing center. Only three of the administrators stated that their forms explicitly communicate something to student writers. Mo said that he thinks that "the [appointment] form is a way that our students come to know us and what we're about because



they might not know what we do or how we can help them, so I hope that the questions we ask help students feel comfortable about talking about their writing with us.” That desire to communicate comfort was also expressed by Matt, who offered that he asks his staff for feedback at the end of each semester on the usefulness of the forms and what might be improved upon:

My tutors almost always say something like ‘there’s not a spot for people who want to work on something that’s not an academic paper,’ or ‘what if we asked for preferred pronouns because the Academic Support Center is doing that now’. We want students to be comfortable or feel that when they come in here, so I do take those things into account, but some changes are not always possible or can be implemented at the drop of a hat.

Susan, the director of a writing studio at a small private university, echoed some of those issues with communicating comfort and inclusiveness to students: “I’d love to ask for preferred pronouns, and I know students wouldn’t care, but some board members or parents might, so I’m cautious about asking those kinds of questions. I’ve been to presentations on this at conferences, and I leave conflicted about the best way to do this at my university because it’s a private Christian school, like I’m not sure how people will respond to it.” These responses seem to indicate that there are a number of external factors that affect an administrator’s decision-making process, such as the limitations of the software, the pressure to neatly compartmentalize collected data for reporting, and the greater institutional body’s influence on those decisions.

Not all participants interviewed, however, use data from appointment forms and client report forms for institutional reporting. Desiray, for example, stated that:

We collect this information to cover our asses. If at some point an instructor calls me up and asks me why his student came to the center and didn’t get any help, I can go into WCOonline and look at what the [tutor] worked on, and then I can either give them a reason or say that, you know, the [tutor] said so-and-so was on their phone the whole time or whatever and wasn’t receptive to feedback. But none of that is used in my own WCOonline reports or the narrative report I write up.

Many of the administrators I interviewed seemed a little curious why I was so interested in the forms' use outside of a session because the conversations tended to shift towards the simple need to keep a record of a session in the event of a complaint or to see if tutors were providing adequate notes. Six of the administrators I talked to said that the interview was making them think hard about their forms because they had not considered much of what I was asking about. To me, this seems to suggest a distance between administrators and the forms' function in a larger workplace framework. As the survey data suggested, administrative needs are more closely satisfied than those of tutors or student writers because of the lens through which they see appointment forms and client report forms; these documents are so commonplace, they demand less attention than other things in the writing center space. Additionally, at larger institutions, administrators cannot have a close connection to the input student writers provide on appointment forms because there is simply too much information that is not easily compiled for analysis. WOnline, for example, is able to run detailed reports on closed-ended prompts that are considered "countable" data, but the program cannot process open-ended prompts in the same way. An administrator would have to manually code this data for analysis, and unfortunately, that takes a lot of time that most people in that position do not have.

Only one administrator mentioned having the luxury of being able to look at all of the form data to make more informed decisions about her center. The paper form used in Katrina's center collects information from the student writer on one side and information from the tutor on the other, completed before and after the session, respectively. Her writing center is small enough for her 12 tutors and their clients to generate a manageable number of forms for Katrina to review each day. These forms are batch scanned each week. "I think I'm pretty lucky or luckier than most directors because I feel like I know exactly who is coming here and why,"

Katrina said with a laugh. “I’ve thought about getting WOnline because it would make some of my job easier, but you know, we don’t need it. Not yet anyway. Right now I’m in a good place because I can use all of this on the session agenda sheet to make better decisions for my writing center.” Katrina elaborated on the decision to use one document and call it a “session agenda sheet”: “I don’t like the word ‘form.’ It’s too clinical and sterile to me, and that’s not what I want it to be for those who use it because, you know, that’s not what I think our writing center is, so I got rid of the word ‘form’.” This decision is a conscious choice on Katrina’s part to make that distinction in thinking about how the document’s audience will perceive it. Also, her intimate knowledge of the center’s staff and clients affords her the ability to make such informed choices.

As described by the participants interviewed, appointment forms and client report forms are used in a myriad of ways, and many of those uses were difficult for them to articulate outside of their administrative roles. Revisions to forms, however, were a little easier for them to talk about because those conversation arose more organically from discussions about issues they see student writers and tutors having completing forms. In the next section, I present findings from the interviews that concern revisions to the appointment form and client report form and discuss for whom those revisions were made.

### **Genre Revision Results (Interviews)**

Survey data provided evidence for how often revisions occur and for specific examples of the last revisions to participants’ appointment forms and client report forms, and interview data was used to elicit more specific details about any breakdowns that occur or workaround that tutors or student writers may use when filling out these forms. Although administrators were not explicitly asked to talk about their revisions, the questions I asked about breakdowns,

workarounds, and how they see individuals interacting with forms provided that information, or they voluntarily shared those insights. As seen in Table 24, 10% of statements were made about keeping some aspects of the forms as is. Nico and Desiray stated that they both use WOnline's stock templates for their forms and see no reason to change them because "we just get the basics" and "we don't want people to take all their time filling these things out".

**Table 24: Genre Revision Results (Interviews)**

<b>Open Code</b>	<b>Instances</b>	<b>Example Language</b>
No change	10% (16 statements)	We haven't had any problems with the way it is.
Changed for tutors	22% (35 statements)	Last semester we added a new report form box for our tutors to add comments about whether they thought the student was ESL because my staff finds these kinds of sessions difficult.
Changed for student writers	22% (34 statements)	We had to make all the questions required because the writers were skipping things meant for them to learn the language of writing so they knew how to talk about it when they get here.
Changed for administrators	25% (39 statements)	Once a year, my assistant coordinator has to search for multiple accounts students make because they've been locked out of the system for too many no-shows, and then combine those so my numbers are more accurate.
Changed for faculty	19% (30 statements)	Reports used to automatically go their professor if the student wanted it to, but we convinced faculty that it would be better if they requested one by emailing me.

Twenty-five percent of statements spoke on changes made for administrative needs, more than tutors' needs (22%), and faculty's needs (19%), which correlates to findings from the survey data.

None of the interviewed participants could identify breakdowns or workarounds regarding student writers. As Nico stated in our interview, “If something’s wrong on the student side of things, it’s up to my staff to tell me because, otherwise, there’s no way for me to know.” Participants did, however, identify a few breakdowns or workarounds caused by tutors. Matt offered one example:

I can’t think of any one breakdown, but I know that one of our tutors who isn’t here anymore would write the same report for each person they worked with. I think he had a Word file saved that he just copied and pasted from. I wouldn’t have known if someone hadn’t told me. I went into his reports and sure enough they were all the same. We had conversations about it in staff meetings so I wouldn’t have to call him out, but it finally came to that. He left on his own because I think he started to dislike the work. After that, I started checking reports every so often, but I stopped that after a while.

Matt, like Nico, admit to the difficulty of having complete awareness of issues that need their attention. Matt did not review the reports his tutors wrote, and therefore did not realize that a tutor was working around a required field on the form. This incident did, however, become a topic in training to emphasize the reason for documenting sessions in a particular way.

Other administrators indicated that moving forms from one medium to another created breakdowns in the workplace. Fisher, an American directing a center abroad, shared some of those issues he faced as a new administrator:

It’s funny because when I first came here there was a paper form that was used just in sessions and then shredded. They weren’t kept for whatever reason. I asked for money to get a license for WOnline, and that was quite an adjustment period for the people who were used to a different way of doing things. Training new tutors was easy because they learned in a writing center practicum I teach while they intern in the center once a week. I’d worked in a writing center in the States, and there the appointment form was where students said what help they needed on their paper, but my staff here didn’t like it because they were used to being more like editors than tutors, so that took a couple of years, I guess, to get everyone on the same page.

The breakdown Fisher encountered began as staff resistance to “a new way of doing things,” and the introduction of a new system for documentation itself caused a larger transition to occur —

not only did the tutors have to adapt to WOnline, they had to adapt to new leadership. As a result, Fisher had to recalibrate tutors' approaches to writing to be more in line with his vision for the center. Forms have an embodied life of doing particular kinds of work, and when that established way of doing things is changed, the whole work dynamic changes as well, and that adaptation presents challenges for administrators.

Susan, on the other hand, experienced a different kind of breakdown involving student writers. She mentioned changing the question "What do you want to work on today?" from an open-ended solicitation to a closed-ended one with multiple choice options. When asked why, she stated:

So it was because everybody was like saying things like 'grammar' or 'writing help with my paper,' so we thought if we take those choices away from [student writers] and give them like 'working on my rough draft' or more specific choices listed that they get better guidance in learning the vocabulary better. My staff complained that all students say is 'grammar,' and that's because they don't have another word. They think grammar is more important because they don't have the language to talk about our discipline because no one has taught them. So we try to give them that language so they're not at a disadvantage when they come in and think tutors are speaking a language they don't understand.

Susan presents a rationale for revising this one prompt on her center's form. She recognized student writers had little command of writing discourse, resulting in input that was not very useful to tutors. Changing the prompt to multiple choice, in her view, presented student writers with a way of contextualizing their goals using the language of writing discourse. In addition, this revision seems to address the needs of administrators, tutors, and student writers all at once: Susan wants writers to be more prepared and knowledgeable about writing terminology, students may acquire the building blocks of that discourse through the form to get more out of a session, and tutors may more easily converse with the student writer about their writing.

In the case of Mike, Fisher, and Susan's experiences with breakdowns, it is worth noting that they prompted other revisions to how documentation happens. The evolution of forms is not limited to changing language, prompt choice, or the medium. Breakdowns and workaround present a problem-solving opportunity to improve writing center practices in general and the documentation methods that support it.

### **Discussion of Interview Data**

Interview data provided concrete moments from administrators' experiences that shed light on how appointment forms, client report forms, or their analogues are actually used in a writing center. The interview data indicates forms serve stakeholders differently, although administrative needs most frequently appeared as a primary concern in use, design, and revision, while student writers' connection to forms is less frequently expressed.

As Susan said, "I know it's not a perfect system, and I've come to terms with that," meaning the appointment tracker used in her center. Limitations imposed by software, the institution, and the student populations served create many challenges for administrators navigating a dynamic workplace.

This dissertation itself is limited by the research design and captures only some of the variables that affect stakeholders' experiences; however, data collected in this study is used to answer the research questions in the following four sections:

1. Research Question 1
2. Research Questions 2 and 3
3. Research Question 4
4. Research Questions 5 and 6



In the next sections, I combine the results of the survey data and interview data to answer my research questions and to construct an argument for a bodies-conscious approach to documentation practices in writing center work.

**Research Question 1: In what ways do these blank, written workplace genres mediate relationships and identities in the writing center?**

As evident in both survey and interview data, all stakeholders' identities and relationships are affected in some way by the appointment form and client report form. Administrators have the most at stake regarding their role as director or coordinator; there may be anxieties about sustainability, growth, and/or possibly tenure. Some administrators may not have chosen to direct a writing center, while others may not have the resources to invest in developing their administrative identity.

Survey data indicates a stronger focus on administrative needs over those of tutors or student writers in use (50%), audience (39%), access (35%), informed design (35%), and revision (30%). More than 55% of administrators who took the survey had fewer than five years of experience in their role (see Table 6), and being in an administrative role for this short period of time might direct their attention elsewhere; they may see forms as low hanging fruit. The emotional labor that administrators experience sustaining relationships with tutors and faculty may also play a role in how forms influence those relationships. Client report forms, especially, have the potential for long-reach impact for developing relationships among administrators, tutors, student writers, and faculty. Although those relationships are governed by other departmental or course-related factors, Susan had this to say about these forms affect relationships and the identities of students, tutors, and faculty:

We do send faculty client report forms. I don't know if that reflects my values as a director, like the pedagogical values of the writing center because I don't think it's our responsibility to answer to faculty, but I found that if faculty on campus know what we're doing and see things coming from us regularly, they're more supportive, which protects my budget, gives tutors a good name on campus and stronger letters of recommendation from faculty in other departments. It also gives faculty a touchpoint to talk to students about writing even in classes where writing in the central content mastery area. I think there's a lot of innocence to that, but if I went to a bigger university, I would never send client reports because I wouldn't want faculty to think the writing center worked for them.

Susan's view of how forms work in her center demonstrates a clear rationale for how they are used, but her remarks also show some tension with her own administrative values and those embodied by the writing center: they are not necessarily one and the same. In addition, the performance aspect of building and maintaining relationships with other faculty through the writing center contributes to the labor side for administrators (Caswell, Grutsch McKinney, & Jackson, 2016), so having forms support that kind of relationship building may be a trade off without sacrificing an administrator's own values.

### **Research Question 2 and 3: What are these genres intended use? How are these genres actually used?**

In the survey data, participants stated that forms are used mostly to satisfy administrative needs, including pilot research, "accreditation and evidence," and institutional reporting. According to the interview data, the appointment form is intended to "see what students expect," "give information that can be looked at to give a larger understanding of what the writing center does," and "make writers reflect on how they want to grow" as writers. Client report forms are intended to capture tutor reflections for training purposes, provide a record of the appointment, and act as "proofs of purchase" to show faculty that their students have come to the center. Their actual use does not neatly reflect intended use. Some participants indicated that users do not fill

them out correctly, giving “wishy washy” responses, copied and pasted responses, and sometimes no responses at all. Mo, when asked about student writers skipping questions, said that “if the student [writer] is about to sit down with a [tutor], then it’s fine if they skip some of those questions.” In other words, the form is not important to discover a student writer’s needs because the tutor will do that work. Matt indicated a similar observation in his center, noting that “there are going to be things written on [the forms] that aren’t helpful, so some tutors just go into the meeting to find out for themselves.” The appointment form, it seems, is intended as a discovery or diagnostic tool, but does not carry the same importance as the negotiation of needs and expectations in the session. Matt goes on to say that he knows this happens, but he “doesn’t raise the point.” Breakdowns like these, for example, may not be seen as problematic, and therefore no corrective action is needed. Actual use does not necessarily mirror intended use.

**Research Question 4: What do these genres do on their own, removed from authorship or creator(s)? In other words, what agency do they possess?**

RQ4 proved the most difficult to answer because what tutors and student writers experience was not a part of this study’s research design; however, as I have demonstrated in the representative example at the beginning of this chapter, forms are comprised of prompts, or utterances, that speak for the writing center when users fill them out. Analyzing the artifact data showed more prompts were closed-ended solicitations. Forms, in other words, mostly asked questions but constrained how users responded. The reason for this design is to expedite the filling out process, force students to speak back using the discourse of writing, and provide data that can be more easily quantified. The actual impact on users is unknown, a limitation of this study, but the data infers that forms are mostly a distant thought on administrators’ radars

because many adapt forms from other sources or use whatever the appointment tracker suggests, leaving me to believe that the forms' agentive properties cannot be fully realized without including tutors' and student writers' experiences. In short, the data suggests there is some impact or force that forms have, but the nature and degree of that force cannot be determined without further research.

**Research Question 5 and 6: How do these genres change over time in a particular center?**

**What new genres are introduced and when, and which ones are abandoned and why?**

Genres change to satisfy the needs of various stakeholders (e.g. assessment, funding, training), and to fix breakdowns in usability, as mentioned by Susan, who changed a goal-oriented question from open-ended to closed. Matt also took corrective action as well when a tutor was not using the client report form as intended. Content is added, removed, or altered to account for usability feedback, assessments, breakdowns, but also because of stakeholders' various needs. Forms may not change at all because there is no immediate need or the software that houses the forms is inflexible. According to participants, the medium of the forms changes most often changes for more efficient and robust recordkeeping, typically moving from paper to an online system.

Few participants noted abandoning the use of forms; only one mentioned that they "no longer have documentation" because of "department reasons." Due to the focused nature of the survey and interviews, other genres outside of appointment forms and client report forms were not explicitly discussed unless there was a reference to feedback from a satisfaction survey, for example.

## **Summary of Research Questions**

As I answered the research questions, I argued that, for administrators, using, designing, and revising writing center forms are activities that concern mostly administrative tasks and needs. Forms' intended use does not always mirror how they are actually used in the space, and forms may have agentic properties, but the limitations of this study prevent me from drawing conclusions about what they are. Forms change over time to address the changing needs of writing center stakeholders, if the documentation format allows for change, or no revision may be seen as necessary. In my discussion of the survey and interview data, I have provided evidence for how genres are used, designed, in revised from administrators' perspective. Answering these questions provide writing center practitioners with an idea of how everyday forms inform workplace practices, create and sustain relationships, and represent values for users.

## **Conclusion**

Without taking into account the design of the space or the other practices and behaviors of the writing center staff, the act of completing a written form, a tutor's interpretation and application of its content, the meeting that follows, and the resulting documentation practices reproduce an activity structure for day-to-day writing center work. This framework may supplement guided useability testing of forms to determine and prevent breakdowns and disruptions. The representative example at the beginning of this chapter, along with the survey and interview data, overall suggest the individual needs of and potential effect on student writers are not given much thought when designing and revising appointment forms and client report forms, presenting a need for such a framework and frequent, more robust usability testing.

Seemingly benign forms more easily fly under the radar of those who use them, shapes the roles, behaviors, and discourse in ways that are not readily visible.

The recontextualization of student writer input over the course of this structured interaction reproduces “genre rules” through the substance of these genres’ contents — their “social motives, themes, and topics expressed in the communication” (Yates & Orlikowski, 1992, p. 300) — that not only mediate the discourse, but also perform to force a situation and a new social reality through subjectification. These activities, the genres that mediate them, and the utterances that construct the total experience are inextricable from the administrative values that saturate them. In the Writing Center at Crystal Lake example, the language of concern as it appears on the form could promote the development of a concerned writer and situate a particular skill or skill-set as a problematic, deficient, or underdeveloped thing to be fixed. Language chosen for these forms may generate potentially harmful consequences and change the student writer's intentions and goals throughout their visit to the center; therefore, administrators should be mindful of how they engage with student writers and staff through these forms; they function as more than communication and a simple staple of recordkeeping.

In the business of the one-on-one tutorial for all students who want help with their writing, that persistent writing center grand narrative (Grutsch McKinney, 2013), forms play a big part in keeping that business going and growing. In the next chapter, I argue that a similar business model in healthcare may help administrators re-orient the student writer in the center. Writing consultation discourse could benefit from borrowing approaches from medical consultation discourse. Not only would this approach support an ethic of care for working with writers, but it would also provide a bodies-conscious lens for designing and revising forms. I then explain the implications of this study and what future research could be explored.

## **CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION**

### **Introduction**

In this dissertation study, I focused on answering research questions designed to better understand the role appointment forms and client report forms play in the writing center and, how they are used, designed, and revised over time. Central to the impetus for and development of this study is a bodies-conscious approach that accounts for the individual needs of student writers and other stakeholders linked to writing centers' day-to-day practices. This study suggested that administrators' needs often overshadow those of tutors and student writers, and those values are evident in the survey and interview data. The potential risk of student writers' bodies being erased in assessment and other means of reporting is greater when those bodies and needs are not made a priority when collecting information about them. If writing center practitioners more fully understand how their own values may become embedded in workplace forms, they could make more informed decisions about how they solicit information from student writers and tutors.

In this chapter, I provide an overview of the study and then offer medical consultation discourse as a possible tool for revising the way writing center administrators think about and design forms. As previewed in Chapter 2, writing centers have a troubled history as "clinics," and while that may have a negative connotation to some writing center practitioners, approaches to medical consultation discourse is not that dissimilar from writing consultation discourse. I use this model to support my argument for a bodies-conscious approach — an ethic of care — in future writing center research. After discussing the possible implications, I conclude this chapter by calling for more research on the design of workplace forms for writing center spaces.

## **Summary of Data**

Chapter 4 provided analyses of the data collected from 50 survey responses, 30 appointment forms, 27 client report forms, 10 contextual documents, and nine interviews. Participants were from diverse backgrounds and had been in their roles from a few months to over 20 years, although most had been an administrator for five years or less (see Table 6). They direct or coordinate centers in multiple countries, although the majority are based in the U.S. at four-year public universities that grant undergraduate and graduate degrees. Most participants indicated in the survey that appointment forms and client report forms reflect administrative uses and were designed with those in mind. Forms are revised for a multitude of reasons including assessment and useability, but 36% of participants indicated in the survey that no revisions have taken place, and 10% of interview statements also reflected either no reason to revise forms or the documentation format does not permit revision.

Fifty-seven percent of participants reported having digital forms, and some participants noted they had switched to WOnline from paper forms or other proprietary appointment tracking software. Fourteen pairs of appointment form and client report forms originated in WOnline. Eleven percent of participants in the survey reported moving from an existing system to WOnline; only one mentioned switching from WOnline to something else because of the availability of technical support in their country.

In interviews, participants could not articulate how their forms reflect the values of their writing center, but they could easily describe how those forms help satisfy their own duties and responsibilities. Data from forms is used in institutional reporting, “proof of purchase” for faculty, internal records, assessment, pilot research, and staff training. Limitations of this study exist: only administrative perspectives are represented, and there was a particularly low response



rate; however, findings suggest an indication of how administrators perceive and understand the ways in which forms are used to support writing center work on a daily basis.

The structured interaction framework in Chapter 4 demonstrated how appointment forms and client report forms can bracket a meeting between student writer and tutor and mediate their relationship and identities. The Writing Center at Crystal Lake (WCL) example was used to show multiple levels of interaction from activity stages to linguistic and semantic features. The framework was also used to hypothesize how form-filling shapes user response for student writers and tutors. In the next section, I offer some implications for the research and suggest what writing center administrators should take away from this study.

### **Implications**

Before discussing the implications of this study, I want to offer one more finding from the study to emphasize the importance of what a writing center values and how that gets communicated through forms. When asked about how their forms reflect the values of their writing centers, participants offered a myriad of responses, such as:

- “I think, in part, the focus on the pre-textual stages.”
- “The form is really too basic to reflect anything except we want to make sure the sessions are useful.”
- “I’m not sure about the value, but let me talk about the importance of the documents.”
- “I think there’s quite a bit that’s purely logistic, like I can’t say that the forms we use completely reflect our values because that’s not the case.”

Of the administrators I interviewed, the topic of values expressed or communicated in these forms almost immediately shifted focus to something else, usually what the forms tell them about the quality of student writers’ satisfaction. Four of the nine interviews got off track because administrators wanted to talk more about post-session satisfaction surveys and the value *they* have. This hesitancy to talk about values is telling in that further demonstrates how little

administrators think about what appointment forms and client report forms communicate to those who use them. As many of the participants in the study had been in their role for less than five years, it may be worth asking administrators to explain how their values differ from those of their center, and that might not be something they have fully considered in such a short period of time.

For administrators, a major implication is that forms are not given enough attention. Reflection on what the writing center, as an institution, values should inform the ways and means it chooses to interact with student writers and the tutors that work there to avoid “potential harm” and reinforcing a hierarchy between student writers and tutors (Cogie, 1998; Weaver, 2001). Collecting large quantities of data from student writers can be made useful beyond measuring satisfaction and quality of service. Institutional reporting and assessment may blind administrators to other ways this information can be used, and unfortunately, the labor involved in directing a center and maintaining a positive reputation understandably leaves little time and fewer resources to explore those options.

As a director of a writing center, one should ask themselves what they value, and then they should collaborate with the staff to determine what the center should value. Determining those values should be the first step in redeveloping workplace forms to ensure those values are communicated. Student writers cannot be expected to do the heavy lifting of trying to parse out what information is being asked of them and why because they also do not have the time or resources for that to be a priority. Forms should communicate this explicitly for transparency. If administrators take away anything from this study, it is that they run the risk of letting their needs compromise and overshadow those of the people who work there and those who come there for help. Administrators may be oblivious to where their priorities are allocated and how

their workplace forms reflect that. Actionable steps should be taken, such as involving other stakeholders in determining the best use, most effective design, and guidelines for revision of forms. Taking action towards more mindful and informed documentation practices will communicate to student writers and tutors the underpinnings of the center's leadership — the shared, guiding force that represents a collective enterprise built for making better writers.

As to how forms “act” upon users, administrators should also take steps to learning that impact in their own centers. As demonstrated in this study, the structure and design of prompts, their sequence, and how they are presented to users in a form constitute complex and dynamic structures that warrant further research. The research design of this dissertation study is limited to administrators' participation, but it could be configured to survey and interview student writers and tutors as well. In the next section, I offer four suggestions for future research that this dissertation could support.

### **Further Research**

A student writer may associate their experience with a visit to a medical clinic because they must go through a similar process, and the workplace forms used before and after the session serve similar functions: they arrive and are asked to complete forms, they are checked in, and then they are taken back to meet with a tutor/consultant. During the meeting, the text in question is assessed, and a conversation takes place about a piece of writing, some textual object. Afterward, the tutor completes session notes or a client report form detailing what was discussed during the meeting and possibly the writer's plan of action. Understanding how these documents function as discursive artifacts bound up in clinical practices is crucial to illuminating how student writers' needs are negotiated in the writing center. Using a medical rhetoric lens and an

ethic of care, a bodies-conscious approach can be developed for administrators to investigate usability, information design, and solicitation methods in their writing centers with more respect and consideration for student writers and their needs.

Borrowing an ethic of care from medicine for writing center work may appear radical on the surface, but both discourses require a similarly strong interpersonal skill-set for one-on-one interaction. Handbooks on medical consultation approaches (Neighbour, 1987; Moulton, 2007), for example, are structured and have similar content to tutoring guides and handbooks, containing sections on:

- Developing effective listening skills and asking questions
- Developing a care plan with the client from their perspective
- Developing a patient-centered consultation style
- Summarizing, reflecting, and managing time
- Speaking the client's language

These handbooks provide consultation models that mirror the structured interaction framework discussed at the end of Chapter 4. As medical consultation discourse shares similar activities, interpersonal skills, and documentation practices with writing consultation discourse, the transfer of applied knowledge may more easily transform administrative and pedagogical approaches to helping student writers. I recommend three areas of future research in writing center studies anchored in a bodies-conscious approach informed by medical consultation discourse.

### **Usability and Responsive Information Design**

One issue with solicitations on appointment forms is that if users are asked to respond, the form itself cannot adapt to that response like a person asking a question. Paper forms and the most commonly used appointment tracker, WOnline (which is designed for writing center use), are not created for adaptive response in their design. The filling of forms is such a common

practice that people may be rushed or come across prompts that do not apply to them, resulting in data that only roughly captures what the designers intended. In responsive design, the form's design itself changes based on user input, or the survey methodology changes (Groves & Heeringa, 2006), similar to skip logic in a survey that moves a user ahead past questions that do not pertain to the given response or conditional questioning in which a question is asked, and then the next is more closely tailored to solicit more specific information from the user based on response. This adaptation is also similar to solicitation methods used by healthcare consultants in a medical encounter. Heritage & Maynard (2006) posit that the structuring and scaffolding of spoken questions in this context mimic "conversation actions" in which each utterance is context-renewing: "Every current utterance will itself form the primary framework for some next action in a sequence" (p. 430). In a writing center session, a tutor may approach questioning similarly, but there may be some reliance on the forms to have already done the solicitation work. If responsive design became the infrastructure for WCL or its competitors, the form-filling process would become more organic and capture more precise data from users. The resources to develop such an intelligent platform are plentiful, and testing data acquisition using responsive design would be one way that writing centers embrace a bodies-conscious approach.

### **Bodily Translation and Transformation through Writing Center Forms**

Some writing center forms, like the ones used by WCL, encourage self-diagnosis by offering a prescribed list of responses regarding a student writer's process or abilities. Gillespie & Moore (2015) observe a similar feature of healthcare forms as in the case of a disability claim form that "entails a process of self-examination, or even confession. ... Filling in such a form entails internalizing the criteria and language of the form, and then describing oneself in terms of

that criteria and language” (p. 532). Those constraints can give way to two constructive effects, translations and transformations, that I believe have implications for writing center work as well.

Gillespie & Moore (2015) define translations and transformations in a healthcare context:

Translating effects relate to the problems of moving meaning out of the social world being documented and into the social world of administration. In our research, translation effects relate to moving lived experiences of disability into bureaucratic indicators that facilitate resource allocation. Transforming effects refer to the way in which the act of form-filling requires form-fillers, not only to orient to an administrative, but to author themselves through that alien discourse. (p. 533)

The relationship between bodies and forms cannot be understated in the writing center workplace, for the same kind of recontextualizations occur in that space. Looking at how student writers respond and react to these forms is the first step to understanding the writing center-as-clinic not as a metaphor, but as a complex identity comprised of many institutional, structurally-embedded practices, processes, and procedures that govern and animate writing center discourse. Administrators who design appointment forms and client report forms or borrow their design from elsewhere should think carefully about impact and effects on users.

The findings in this dissertation support my claim that forms have agentive properties, but I cannot definitively conclude what those properties are based on the limited scope of my data and the study’s research design. Future research could build off this study using think-aloud protocols with form-fillers, observing documentation practices for breakdowns in usability, and/or interviewing tutors and student writers to form a more comprehensive understanding of how form-filling affects user experience.

### **Aggregating and Constellating Writers’ Histories**

Research on patient intake forms and doctor-patient communication can further illuminate the nature of the writing center’s practices and use that knowledge to create or revise

forms to acquire more accurate and useful information from student writers. Writing center practitioners could benefit from studying how information is acquired from patients, what tools are used to ask for that information, and how that data is used and constellates to form a case.

As stated in Chapter 4, WCOonline cannot automatically generate analytics on uncountable data, such as responses to open-ended prompts, nor can they provide a quick and accessible snapshot of what the writing center “knows” about an individual student writer. So much information is collected from student writers and tutors that mostly sits in a database unused, or the forms are not archived at all. These forms may have a very short shelf life, only supporting learning in one session, and since so much information may reside within a center’s records, perhaps that information can be put to better use. Effort should be put into developing a new feature for WCOonline or developing an entirely new system design for writing center work with the architecture and infrastructure to show useful information about a writer in the form of analytics, something user-friendly that tracks trends and micro-trends and projections to better know and understand the bodies that move through the writing center space. I argue for the concept of a “writer’s history” as a collection, or file system, or archive that can provide deep information about the center’s relationship with a singular writer. Especially in centers with a large staff, this kind of focused documentation would allow tutors and administrators to identify more individualized approaches to tutoring a specific student writer. Administrators might assume appointment forms are limited in their capabilities to function outside the context of one meeting, but forms can be an entry point for deeper learning about the student writers coming to the center and the kind of help they want. Having that information in a storehouse of data and a platform to display it at a glance could be the starting point for the development of writers’ histories. Thinking of student writers as patients to be treated and constructing them as a case is

not my argument, nor am I claiming that the solution is to medicalize the writing center workplace, but I do think that accounting for individual writers and learning about their particular needs and history in the center would make for a bodies-conscious approach to that work. Bodies easily become lost in being reduced to numbers or representative samples; therefore, borrowing some aspects of medical consultation discourse and the clinical paradigm at least brings fuller consideration to writers' bodies, how they are used in reporting and training, and what value they have in a writing center and in the writing center field; however, it is up to administrators to experiment and test the possibilities to see what future research and scholarship will offer.

### **Conclusion**

This study has answered these research questions:

- In what ways do blank, written workplace genres mediate relationships and identities in the writing center?
- What are these genres *intended* use?
- How are these genres *actually* used?
- What do these genres do on their own, removed from authorship or creator(s)? In other words, what agency do they possess?
- How do these genres change over time in a particular center?
- What new genres are introduced and when, and which ones are abandoned and why?

Furthermore, the study has suggested that workplace genres serve administrative functions, that forms have salient features that compliment those functions, and that forms' design has an impact on the construction of identities and relationships of users. An emphasis on discerning that impact could help reveal the ways genres co-construct and co-constitute identities. Instead of allowing assessment goals, budgets, and institutional reporting to most strongly influence the methods and means of data collection, the needs of student writers and the tutoring staff should take precedence. Adopting a discourse perspective that borrows from medical rhetoric can possibly help writing center practitioners to develop a more bodies-conscious, writer-focused



pedagogy. The clinical paradigm has generated quite a lot of negative attention in writing center work, but literature on medical consultation approaches could enrich writing center theory, research, and practice.

Writing centers and medical clinics both teeter at the nexus of professional discourse and institutional discourse. As an institution simultaneously embedded in and peripheral to a larger institution of higher education, writing centers perform their institutionality through the workplace genres they value. Like Britt (2006), I see writing centers as “cultural agents entangled with other institutions” that employ technical communication to “define themselves and conduct their cultural work” (p. 147–148). This study was designed for all writing center practitioners to reconsider the narrative of which they are a part, to provide an avenue for reflection and possibilities to help change the narrative, and to invite new critiques of the behaviors and practices that make writing center work possible.

In Grutsch McKinney’s (2013) concluding chapter to *Peripheral Visions for Writing Center Work*, she states that the grand narrative is a representation, not how it truly is, and that if this narrative does not tell my (the reader’s) story, then I must tell it (p. 86). Similarly, Beth Boquet (1999) calls for new voices, new perspectives, and new narratives to broaden our conception of writing center work (p. 479), and I see an opportunity to put in my oar. If workplace forms discussed in this dissertation are to be useful beyond menial tasks, they should be a routine part of administrators’ maintenance, and the information collected should be put to greater use in developing writers’ histories. As a result, administrators can better understand the granular effects on stakeholders within the center and across the institution. Documentation methods may not be perfect, as Susan offered in our interview, but knowing its limitations gives way to new possibilities. Reorienting our focus to bodies in the writing center workplace along

with starting conversations about those seemingly mundane forms will bring both into the light because they, like other genres in the writing center workplace, “cry out for study” (Hall, 2017), and answering that call can open new lines of inquiry for writing center studies.

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## **APPENDIX A: SURVEY**

This confidential broad survey is designed to learn the documentation practices in your center, particularly those that take place immediately before and after a session. At the end of the survey, you'll be prompted to upload these documents:

1. Intake/appointment form that student writers complete. If no forms are used, what information you collect from student writers prior to an appointment starting
2. Post-session client report form that the tutor completes
3. Tutor Handbook/Manual/other resource that explains how to complete these forms

**1. What is your institution's name?**

**2. What is your institution's type?**

- a. High school
- b. Historically Black College or University (HBCU)
- c. Hispanic-Serving Institution (HSI)
- d. Tribal College or University (TCU)
- e. Asian American and Pacific Islander Serving Institution (AAPISI)
- f. University; Four-year PhD granting public
- g. University; Four-year PhD granting private
- h. University; Four-year undergraduate granting public
- i. University; Four-year undergraduate granting private
- j. Community college
- k. Online school (no brick and mortar campus)
- l. Other type of institution (please specify)

**3. What kinds of appointments are offered at your center? Select all that apply.**

- a. Face-to-face
- b. Online synchronous
- c. Online asynchronous
- d. Scheduled in advance
- e. Walk-ins

**4. How do students make appointments at your writing center? Select all that apply.**

- a. WOnline/TutorTrac/Google Calendar/Other Online Appointment Tracker
- b. Email
- c. Paper form
- d. By phone/in person
- e. No documentation occurs
- f. Other (please specify)

**5. Many writing centers use session reports for in-house recordkeeping, but they might also be used for writer's own records or to share with faculty. These documentation**



**practices take many forms. How do tutors document the events of the session afterwards at your center? Select all that apply.**

- a. WOnline/TutorTrac/Other Online Appointment Tracker
- b. Paper form
- c. Digital form (e.g. Google Forms)
- d. Journaling/Reflective writing (personal; not shared with writers)
- e. No documentation occurs
- f. Other (please specify)

**6. Who is the primary audience for the audience for these forms?**

- a. Administrators
- b. Tutors
- c. Faculty
- d. Student writers
- e. Other (please specify)

**7. Who has access to these forms?**

- a. Administrators
- b. Tutors
- c. Faculty
- d. Student writers
- e. Other (please specify)

**8. Did you design these forms?**

- a. Yes
- b. No

**9. If you answered “yes” to Question 7, what informed your design?**

**10. If you answered “no” to Question 7, where did these forms originate?**

- a. Another center, as is (no changes made)
- b. Another center, with some modifications
- c. Suggested by appointment tracker (WOnline, TutorTrac, etc.)
- d. Inherited from previous director or administrator

**11. How often are these forms revised?**

- a. Each semester
- b. Each academic year
- c. Every 2-4 years as needed
- d. No revisions have occurred

**12. Please briefly describe the last revision to your intake/appointment form and the reason for revision. If you haven’t revised your forms, describe the reason for its development.**

**13. Please briefly describe the last revision to your post-session client report form and the reason for revision. If you haven’t revised your forms, describe the reason for its development.**

- 14. What is your title?**
- 15. How long have you been in your position?**
- 16. How have your documentation practices changed since you have been in your position? (i.e. migrating from paper forms to online forms)**
- 17. Do you consent to receiving follow up questions regarding your responses?**
  - a. Yes
  - b. No
- 18. If you answered yes to Question 17, please provide your preferred email address.**

**\*Please attach the following artifacts (as PDFs or screenshots — instructions can be found [here](#)) to this survey before submitting:**

- 4. Intake/appointment form that student writers complete**
- 5. Post-session client report form that the tutor completes**
- 6. Tutor Handbook/Manual/other resource that explains how to complete these forms**

**Thank you for participating in this study. Your responses will be archived as confidential, and if you consented to follow up questions and/or interviews, you may be contacted regarding the next stage of this research project.**

## APPENDIX B: IRB CORRESPONDENCE LETTER



**EAST CAROLINA UNIVERSITY**  
**University & Medical Center Institutional Review Board**  
4N-64 Brody Medical Sciences Building · Mail Stop 682  
600 Moyer Boulevard · Greenville, NC 27834  
Office **252-744-2914** · Fax **252-744-2284**  
[www.ecu.edu/ORIC/irb](http://www.ecu.edu/ORIC/irb)

### Notification of Initial Approval: Expedited

From: Social/Behavioral IRB  
To: Brandon Hardy  
CC: Nicole Caswell  
Date: 11/7/2018  
Re: UMCIRB 18-002224

Constellating Identities and Workplace Genres in Writing Center Discourse

I am pleased to inform you that your Expedited Application was approved. Approval of the study and any consent form(s) is for the period of 11/7/2018 to 11/6/2019. The research study is eligible for review under expedited category #7. The Chairperson (or designee) deemed this study no more than minimal risk.

Changes to this approved research may not be initiated without UMCIRB review except when necessary to eliminate an apparent immediate hazard to the participant. All unanticipated problems involving risks to participants and others must be promptly reported to the UMCIRB. The investigator must submit a continuing review/closure application to the UMCIRB prior to the date of study expiration. The Investigator must adhere to all reporting requirements for this study.

Approved consent documents with the IRB approval date stamped on the document should be used to consent participants (consent documents with the IRB approval date stamp are found under the Documents tab in the study workspace).

The approval includes the following items:

Name	Description
Consent Letter	Consent Forms
Dissertation Study Survey.docx	Surveys and Questionnaires
Email recruitment letter.docx	Recruitment Documents/Scripts
Hardy Prospectus.pdf	Study Protocol or Grant Application

The Chairperson (or designee) does not have a potential for conflict of interest on this study.

IRB00000705 East Carolina U IRB #1 (Biomedical) IORG0000418  
IRB00003781 East Carolina U IRB #2 (Behavioral/SS) IORG0000418

## APPENDIX C: EMAIL RECRUITMENT LETTER AND CONSENT FORM

Dear Writing Center Administrator,

I am a PhD candidate at East Carolina University in the English Department, and I am looking for writing center administrators to take a [brief survey for my dissertation](#) research entitled, “Constellating Workplace Genres and Identities in Writing Center Discourse.” I am contacting you directly because your writing center is located within driving distance of ECU, and would like to have the possibility of in-person follow-up interviews and site visits. The purpose of my study is:

1. to capture a broad picture of documentation practices in writing centers, and
2. to learn how written documents are used by tutors and student writers.

By doing this research, I hope to learn how these documents evolve over time, and the impact they have on users. Your participation is completely voluntary, and your information is kept confidential.

It will take about 8 minutes to complete this [survey](#). You will be asked questions that relate to the history of documents in your center, their design, modification, and implementation. At the end of the survey, you'll be asked to upload a few artifacts (text files or screenshots are acceptable):

1. form that student writers complete before a session
2. form that tutors complete after a session
3. A handbook, manual, or other resource that describes how these forms are to be properly completed (for context)

Collection of responses will begin immediately, and the study will close on Monday, December 10, 2018. A reminder email will be sent out one week before the study closes.

If you decide to take part in this study, check the AGREE box at the start of the [survey](#), and the research questions will appear.

You are welcome to contact me with any questions or concerns, and thank you for taking part in my writing center research.

Sincerely,  
Brandon Hardy, Principal Investigator

*This research is overseen by the University and Medical Center Institutional Review Board (UMCIRB) at ECU and has been approved (UMCIRB 18-002224). Therefore, some of the UMCIRB members or the UMCIRB staff may need to review your research data. However, the information you provide will not be linked to you, unless you voluntarily elect to provide*

*identifying information on the survey. I will take precautions to ensure that anyone not authorized to see your identity will not be given that information.*

*If you have questions about your rights when taking part in this research, call the Office of Research Integrity & Compliance (ORIC) at 252-744-2914 (days, 8:00 am-5:00 pm). If you would like to report a complaint or concern about this research study, call the Director of ORIC, at 252-744-1971. You do not have to take part in this research, and you can stop at any time.*

## APPENDIX D: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

### **Audience/Access/Values**

- How do your appointment/intake/write up forms reflect the values of your writing center?
- What do you hope these forms communicate to students?
- In what ways does the input on these forms inform making decisions as a writing center administrator?
- During staff meetings and training, how do you talk with tutors about the information gained through appointment/intake forms?

### **Action/Breakdowns**

- How do you see tutors using the information on these forms?
- How do you see students engaging with appt form and client report form?
  - What workarounds or “cheats” do you see student writers doing when they complete a appointment/intake form? Why do you believe that is happening?
  - How do students adapt to completing forms? Skipping questions, etc.
- Have there been any “breakdowns” in how these forms are used? In other words, have forms been used in unintended ways? (give examples: pronouns field)
- What strategies have your tutors development for completing client forms?

### **Use**

- As a writing center administrator, what information from the *appointment/intake form* is most useful to you? How do you use that information in your center and when reporting to stakeholders?
- As a writing center administrator, what information from the *client report form* is most useful to you? How do you use that information? How is it used when reporting to stakeholders?

